

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**AN EXTENDED UTAUT2 MODEL
OF VOTING CHOICE AMONG
YOUNG VOTERS IN SELANGOR:
INTEGRATING NEWMAN AND
SHETH'S MODEL OF PRIMARY
VOTER BEHAVIOUR**

**FATIMAH YAZMIN BINTI HAJI
YAHAYA**

PhD

June 2026

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
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CONFIRMATION BY PANEL OF EXAMINERS

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ABSTRACT

The expansion of the youth electorate following *Undi18* has intensified the role of social media in shaping political engagement among young voters in Malaysia. However, existing voter behaviour models do not adequately explain how social media acceptance translates into voting choice, while technology acceptance models remain limited to behavioural intention without addressing electoral decision-making outcomes. This theoretical gap highlights the need for an integrated framework that explains both technology adoption and voter behaviour. This study developed and validated an integrated model combining the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) and Newman and Sheth's Model of Primary Voter Behaviour. A quantitative cross-sectional survey was conducted among 411 young voters aged 18 to 40 in Selangor. Data were analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). The results showed that social influence, hedonic motivation, and performance expectancy significantly influenced behavioural intention, while facilitating conditions, habit, and behavioural intention significantly influenced voting choice. Mediation analysis further indicated that behavioural intention acts as a key mechanism linking social media acceptance factors to voting decision-making. The findings suggest that political participation among young voters is increasingly shaped by socially driven and affective digital environments rather than purely rational considerations. The originality of this study lies in being the integrated empirical model that combines UTAUT2 with Newman and Sheth's Model of Primary Voter Behaviour to explain young voters' electoral choice in a post-*Undi18* Malaysian context. This study contributes to political communication and voter behaviour literature by demonstrating how technology acceptance factors interact with multidimensional electoral evaluation and offers practical insights for designing more engaging digital political communication strategies.

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LIST OF SYMBOLS

Symbols

α	Cronbach Alpha
R^2	R Square
F^2	F Square
β	Beta

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations

AVE	Average Variance Extracted
BCa	Bias-corrected and accelerated
CI	Confidence Interval
CMB	Common-Method Bias
CR	Composite Reliability
GE12	12 th General Election
GE13	13 th General Election
GE14	14 th General Election
GE15	15 th General Election
HTMT	Heterotrait – Monotrait
MYP	Malaysian Youth Policy
NFI	Normed Fit Index
PCA	Principal Component Analysis
PLS-SEM	Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modelling
SD	Standard Deviation
SMEE	Social Media Effort Expectancy
SMFC	Social Media Facilitating Conditions
SMH	Social Media Habit
SMHM	Social Media Hedonic Motivation

SMPE	Social Media Performance Expectancy
SMSI	Social Media Social Influence
SRMR	Standardised Root Mean Square Residual
VCE	Voting Current Events
VCI	Voting Candidate Image
VEF	Voting Emotional Feelings
VEI	Voting Epistemic Issues
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor
VIP	Voting Issues and Policies
VPE	Voting Personal Events
VSİ	Voting Social Imagery
YVBI	Young Voters' Behavioural Intention

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The rapid evolution of digital communication technologies has profoundly reshaped the political landscape, especially among young voters whose political participation is increasingly mediated by social media platforms. In Malaysia, this transformation has become more pronounced following the *Undi18* constitutional amendment, which expanded the electorate to include voters aged 18 and above, marking a new era in participatory democracy. The 15th General Election (GE15) illustrated the growing influence of young voters as a decisive electoral bloc, often referred to as the “kingmakers” of the election, in which social media played a central role in shaping political discourse, mobilisation, and voter decision-making.

Despite this growing digital engagement, the mechanisms by which social media use translates into political participation and voting behaviour among young Malaysians remain underexplored. Prior research has often emphasised social media’s role in information dissemination or opinion formation. However, little empirical work has integrated technology acceptance theories with voter behaviour models to understand how digital interactions influence actual electoral choices. In order to address this gap, the present research integrates the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) (Venkatesh, Thong & Xu, 2012) and the Model of Primary Voter Behaviour (Newman & Sheth, 1985) to examine how social media acceptance factors such as performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, facilitating conditions, hedonic motivation, and habit shape young voters’ behavioural intentions and ultimately affect their voting choices.

In this research, Young Voters’ Behavioural Intention (YVBI) served as a mediating construct, explaining how social media technology acceptance factors influence voters’ choice, which comprises multiple sub-dimensions, including issues and policies, emotional feelings, candidate image, epistemic issues, social imagery, personal events, and current events. The integration of these two theoretical perspectives provides a comprehensive understanding of how technological,

psychological, and contextual variables jointly influence young Malaysians' electoral behaviour in the digital age.

Furthermore, this research aimed to generate insights that extend beyond theoretical contributions. In the Malaysian political context, where social media has become both a campaign battleground and a public sphere for opinion exchange, understanding how digital acceptance and engagement predict political action has significant implications for policymakers, electoral commissions, and political communicators seeking to foster informed participation among young citizens. The findings of this research clarify how social media functions not only as a tool for communication but also as a determinant of democratic participation and political decision-making among young voters.

This research contributed to both political communication and technology adoption literature by developing and empirically testing an integrated model that links social media technology acceptance with voter choice determinants. It offered a framework to explain the dynamics of young voter engagement in Malaysia's evolving political ecosystem, ultimately providing theoretical, methodological, and practical insights into the role of social media in shaping modern electoral behaviour.

1.2 Research Background

The intersection between social media and political participation has become a pivotal focus in political communication research. Globally, digital platforms have evolved into influential tools for political campaigning, agenda-setting, and civic dialogue. In Malaysia, the digitalisation of politics has accelerated since the 12th General Election (GE12) in 2008, when social media first emerged as a powerful alternative channel for political expression. The trend has intensified in GE13, GE14, and GE15, with online narratives, viral content, and digital influencers shaping voter perceptions, especially among younger demographics.

In an era shaped by the digitalisation of everyday life, young voters are increasingly redefining how they participate in politics. These changes include traditional avenues such as voting and party affiliation to digital forms of engagement, including activism on social media platforms. This change is part of a broader transformation driven by emerging technologies and evolving social and political environments. As Boulianne (2020) notes, the rise of social networking platforms has

significantly expanded opportunities for personalised, expressive, and interactive political participation, particularly among younger demographics. Young voters nowadays predominantly engage in political discourse on platforms such as TikTok, using hashtags and memes, which have become a prominent feature of their engagement with political issues. Through platforms like TikTok, Twitter, and Instagram, campaigns mobilise peers and challenge dominant narratives, often outside formal political structures. The COVID-19 pandemic increased this transformation by complicating face-to-face interactions and prompting young voters to seek alternative avenues for self-expression online.

This shift reflects a profound change in the formation of political intention and behaviour. Through visual storytelling, interactivity, and immediacy, social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and X have facilitated communicative features that appeal to young voters. Thus, making them productive grounds for shaping political attitudes and intentions. These platforms blur the boundaries between personal expression and civic action, enabling users to perform political identities in ways that are both public and networked.

The passing of the Constitution (Amendment) Bill 2019 by the Malaysian Parliament, which lowers the voting age from 21 to 18, has significantly changed the political landscape. It indicates an influx of approximately 5.8 million voters aged 18 to 21 for Malaysia's 15th General Election. Considering the government's decision to lower the voting age to 18, the local media have recognised these technologically savvy young voters as potential political kingmakers (Zakiah et al., 2019). The young-voter demographic constitutes a crucial group in Malaysian politics. The growing population of young individuals, who comprise over half of Malaysia's registered voters, has a significant influence on election outcomes. This phenomenon is evident in the increased engagement of young voters in Malaysia with the country's political affairs, as they have demonstrated a bold determination to effect change in the government that has been in power for six decades, in favour of a new governing body.

The nation's political trajectory over the past half-decade has witnessed notable shifts that have resonated globally. The revelation of significant financial improprieties in multimillion-dollar mega projects during the 14th General Election (GE14) leader controversy in 2018 has undeniably ushered in a new era of political propriety, influencing the perception of stability and national security on a global scale. The transfer of power from the long-standing ruling party to the dominant party in the

country has elicited a range of responses, emotions, aspirations, and, notably, disillusionment among millions of Malaysian citizens. The primary factor attributed to the downfall of the previous government after six decades was the significant involvement of young voters (Sharifah Syahira et al., 2018; Welsh, 2018). This election was widely recognised by politicians and prominent data analysts as a 'social media election' due to the extensive utilisation of social media platforms by both the ruling and Opposition coalitions (Tan, 2022). These platforms served as crucial battlegrounds for their campaign strategies, particularly in their attempts to engage and influence the digitally connected young voters.

In recent years, Malaysian youth have emerged as a digitally literate yet politically ambivalent demographic. According to Merdeka Centre (2024) in their National Youth Survey 2024, their primary concerns revolve around cost of living, unemployment, and political dissatisfaction, despite high social media use and online engagement (Merdeka Centre, 2024). The 15th General Election (GE15) Survey Highlights reported that youth voters increasingly prioritised national leadership, especially prime ministerial candidates, over local candidates, suggesting a shift toward political personalisation (Merdeka Centre, 2022). However, the One-Year After GE15 Survey revealed that only 31% of Malaysians believed the country was heading in the right direction, with economic grievances dominating public sentiment (Merdeka Centre, 2023). At the same time, Halim et al. (2022) found that youth political participation was significantly shaped by social media usage, political interest, perceived information quality, and political knowledge. These interlocking trends, such as growing digital reliance, dissatisfaction with governance, and psychosocial drivers of participation, have underscored the need to explore how technological and affective factors shape young voters' political behaviour in Malaysia's post-GE15 landscape.

The political landscape of Malaysia has undergone significant changes in a relatively short period following the 14th general election. Within a term of less than five years, the federal administration has witnessed three leadership transitions. These transitions involved the appointment of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad as the 7th Prime Minister, followed by Tan Sri Dato' Hj. Mahiaddin Hj. Md Yasin as the 8th Prime Minister, and finally, Dato' Sri Ismail Sabri Yaakob as the 9th Prime Minister and now YAB Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim as the 10th Prime Minister of Malaysia. The onset of the COVID-19 epidemic in Malaysia in the early months of 2020 provided a comprehensive examination of the government's capacity to effectively address and

oversee several dimensions of security, including human, social, political, health, and economic domains.

The Malaysian political landscape marked another milestone in 2022. The 15th General Election yielded inconclusive results, as no single alliance obtained the minimum required to form a government. It created a political history of the nation when Parliament was suspended for five days. It is noteworthy that the current state of the election results is intertwined with a perplexing pattern in young voters' cognition, which may only become comprehensible upon the occurrence of unusual outcomes in the 2018 and 2022 elections. This group of young voters represents a distinctive generation characterised by their lifestyle and cognitive patterns, which have been significantly shaped by the rapid proliferation of information technology, altering the dynamics of conventional, contemporary society.

The young voter population is seen as a crucial asset for a nation's growth and prosperity, and its significance has garnered increasing attention in contemporary times. The aforementioned changes affect the nation and catalyse all stakeholders to recognise the significance of giving this group due consideration, as they represent the forthcoming group responsible for administering the country. The proliferation of contemporary societal advancements across the nation significantly contributes to increasing political participation and literacy among the younger population. In contrast to the older demographic, who are frequently observed engaging in traditional political practices without a willingness to adapt, the younger generation is generally regarded more favourably. The proliferation of political knowledge can also foster a heightened sense of critical thinking among younger individuals.

Over the last two decades, information and communication technologies have advanced rapidly, with significant improvements in mobile connectivity and social media platforms. These developments have fundamentally reshaped how individuals, particularly young voters, access news, engage in civic discourse, and participate in political life. Social media now plays a central role in shaping interpersonal communication, enhancing civic competencies, and fostering issue-based activism. According to Theocharis and De Moor (2021), digital media have enabled more personalised, expressive, and non-institutional forms of political participation, particularly among younger generations. According to Data Reportal (2025), there are now over 5.24 billion active social media users globally, representing more than 60% of the world's population, with 94.2% of internet users engaging with at least one social

platform. The vast majority of this engagement occurs via mobile devices, underscoring the ubiquity of digital access. These trends highlight the growing influence of social media as both a news source and a political arena, particularly among Generations X, Y, and Z.

Media and communication researchers, political scientists, sociologists, and scholars of international relations have performed hundreds of studies on various facets of social media usage (Shehzad, Ali, & Shah, 2021; Boulianne & Theocharis, 2020; Ahmad et al., 2019). By examining the history of social media and politics, one may gain a deeper understanding of social media's evolution and its effects on politics. Extending this line of inquiry, Amsalem & Zoizner's (2023) meta-analysis of 76 studies demonstrates that social media plays a dual role: enhancing users' political knowledge while simultaneously introducing biases through algorithmic curation and selective exposure. This duality underscores the importance of interrogating not just usage patterns but also structural affordances and normative outcomes of these platforms. Barack Obama's 2008 presidential victory demonstrated the advantages of employing social media in political campaigns. It has been recognised as the beginning of political engagement and campaigning on social media (Anderson et al., 2021). Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have become powerful tools for politicians and political parties to communicate with voters, mobilise supporters, and spread their messages. YouTube is viewed as a personal video-sharing platform and is used to download and post videos of political lectures and other political movements (Litvinenko, 2021). Other platforms, such as WhatsApp, also play a vital role in the political environment as sources of information and engagement. Social media has evolved into a user-friendly platform with a variety of informational channels used to influence people's decisions to buy goods and services and to engage in other activities (Tang, 2023). As a result, these technologies can help political actors connect with their constituents and make it easier for constituents to participate politically, such as joining a municipal council, exercising their voting rights during an election, or actively engaging in the fiscal decision-making processes of their local government.

Political participation remains a cornerstone of democratic governance, enabling citizens to influence decision-making, hold elected officials accountable, and shape public policy. Traditionally, such participation has been expressed through institutionalised activities like voting, affiliating with political parties, attending political rallies, and engaging with representatives (Verba & Nie, 1987). However,

recent scholarship highlights a diversification of participatory modes, driven by technological advancements and evolving civic norms.

According to He et al. (2022), political participation encompasses a spectrum of legitimate activities undertaken by citizens to influence governmental decisions, ranging from electoral engagement to policy advocacy. These activities not only facilitate democratic accountability but also enhance individual well-being and civic efficacy. Bimber and Gil de Zúñiga (2022) emphasise the role of social influence in shaping political behaviour across diverse national contexts, noting that interpersonal networks and digital platforms increasingly mediate individuals' political engagement.

Moreover, Asimakopoulos et al. (2025) argue that the integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) such as social media, e-government platforms, and digital voting systems has redefined the contours of civic engagement. These tools have expanded access to political discourse, enabled real-time mobilisation, and fostered participatory governance, particularly among younger and digitally literate populations. However, they also introduce challenges related to misinformation, surveillance, and unequal access, which complicate the democratic promise of inclusivity. Such participation has included activities like voting, affiliating with political parties, attending political gatherings, and engaging with representatives. While these conventional forms remain important, recent scholarship has expanded the conceptualisation of political participation to include expressive, digital, and issue-based actions. As Weiss (2020) notes, political participation is typically defined by four key attributes: it is an activity, voluntary in nature, undertaken by citizens in their non-professional capacity, and directed toward influencing political or governmental outcomes. This broader understanding reflects the evolving landscape of civic engagement, particularly among younger generations who increasingly participate through non-institutional and digital means.

According to Kaskazi and Kitzie (2023), the political participation practices mentioned above are often regarded as indispensable for the effective operation of democratic systems, as they facilitate citizen involvement in making crucial decisions. In recent years, there has been a noticeable decline in the popularity of conventional forms of political participation across many nations, particularly among younger people. The observed phenomenon can be attributed to various factors, including diminished confidence in political institutions, scepticism towards political factions, and a sense of detachment from the political system (Zagidullin et al., 2021). Within

this setting, social media has been widely recognised and commended as a novel and groundbreaking instrument that facilitates political participation among young voters, subsequently motivating them to engage and take action actively (Kenna & Hensley, 2019). Omotayo et al. (2020) argue that social media platforms have created opportunities for young voters to engage in public discourse and express previously inaccessible viewpoints.

Social media can dismantle conventional barriers to political participation by offering young people a personalised space to express their views and engage in civic discourse. Moon and Bai (2020) found that digital literacy and attention to political news on social media significantly predict youth civic engagement. Young voters have also been encouraged to take part in protests and rallies through social media, especially those organised on social media. Although social media has been recognised as a novel instrument for augmenting political participation, concerns persist about its potential adverse impact on it (Arshad & Khurram, 2020).

Various academics have researched the factors that influence young voters' participation in national elections. Allam et al. (2022) highlight that media literacy, access to information, and digital competencies significantly influence young voters' decisions to participate in national elections. Their findings underscore the importance of understanding how emerging communication technologies and civic awareness shape electoral behaviour among first-time and young voters, especially in transitional democracies like Malaysia. Kadriu and Marmilova (2022) examined the factors motivating young voters in Kosovo to participate in elections, identifying civic duty, desire for change, and support for candidates as key drivers. Their findings also highlight similarities with youth voting preferences in Russia, suggesting shared motivations across contexts. Firstly, the allure of the voting process itself, with its inherent fascination, served as a compelling reason for their participation. Additionally, a genuine concern for their nation's future played a significant role in motivating young people to exercise their right to vote. Furthermore, the desire to express their political perspectives and to ensure their voices were heard also contributed to their active involvement in the electoral process. Ultimately, these factors drove young voters to participate actively in the voting process.

The Internet is making a substantial contribution to informing the public about political events, interacting with its users, and motivating them to participate in political activities outdoors. Social media affects voter behaviour (Bond et al., 2012; Kovic et

al., 2017; Zhuravskaya et al., 2020). There is a strong connection made through online media and is maintained offline as well. Nevertheless, young voters remain highly active users of the Internet and social media. Recent studies continue to affirm that social media platforms not only inform and mobilise young voters but also contribute to ideological polarisation and misinformation, particularly through algorithm-driven content and influencer dynamics (Rita et al., 2023)

Young voters continue to benefit from political online achievements, which motivate them to participate in democratic activities. Social media has also made it easier for candidates to engage directly with voters. Politicians may use social media to convey their perspectives on critical issues, respond to voter concerns, and build support for their campaigns. This direct contact may aid in developing trust and rapport with voters, as well as in countering negative assaults from opponents. Boulianne (2020) further states that participation among voters and the public has changed due to social media. As a result, the information supplied by social media about politics, as well as their engagement in politics, all remain linked. The use of social media has the potential to increase political participation, particularly among young voters (Dankwah & Mensah, 2021). These characteristics influence election outcomes. Voting is a civic duty that every citizen must fulfil to uphold their country's democratic ideals (Javaid et al., 2020). According to Mutawwali et al. (2023), this is a common and effective democratic process that allows people to indicate whether they agree or disagree with a national goal, candidate, or political party. Everyone agrees that young voters can do their part as citizens by voting, voicing their views, and having an impact on national politics.

The current political system in Malaysia is characterised by a constitutional monarchy and a Westminster-style parliamentary system, rooted in its colonial legacy under British rule. As Kamaruddin & Rogers (2020) note, these structures have shaped Malaysia's governance, contributing to centralised power and elite dominance, while posing challenges to democratic transformation. While the King has the formal position of head of state, the actual exercise of governing authority rests with the democratically elected government. At the national level, governance is entrusted to the federal government, headed by the Prime Minister. Similarly, at the state level, the state government is led by the Chief Minister. In most democratic nations, the authority to govern the country is divided into three branches: the executive, legislative, and judicial. These three branches of government ensure democracy through the separation of

powers and checks and balances. Nevertheless, a significant concentration of authority is observed within the executive branch, particularly during the tenure of the Prime Minister.

General elections are conducted to select representatives for the Dewan Rakyat at the federal level, as well as for state assemblies at the state level. The federal government is formed by the party or coalition that holds the majority in the Dewan Rakyat. The formation of state governments follows a similar pattern across states. Elections are held every five years unless the Prime Minister calls for an early poll. In these elections, each voter will cast an independent vote for their chosen candidate, and the candidate who receives the most support will be elected to govern the country. The election process is based on the 'first-past-the-post' system, which means the party or coalition that wins 112 seats, the number needed for a simple majority in the 222-seat lower house of Parliament, will form a government.

The political landscape transformed the 2008 General Election (GE12), when a multi-ethnic opposition coalition, spearheaded by Anwar Ibrahim, a former Deputy Prime Minister, resurfaced. Anwar Ibrahim had previously been ejected from the ruling party, Barisan Nasional (BN), and subsequently incarcerated in 1998. Following the 12th General Election (GE12), a formal opposition alliance known as the People's Alliance, or Pakatan Rakyat (PR), was established. This alliance was formed by the National Justice Party (Parti Keadilan Rakyat, PKR), the Democratic Action Party (DAP), and PAS. During the 12th General Election (GE12), the Barisan Nasional (BN) saw its parliamentary majority decline, resulting in the loss of its two-thirds majority. Additionally, the BN also lost control over five state legislative assemblies. However, the BN was able to reclaim control of the Perak state legislative assembly through the defection of three state legislators from the People's Alliance (PR). During the 13th General Election (GE13), support for Barisan Nasional (BN) declined noticeably. However, insufficient to enable the Pakatan Rakyat (PR) to form a governing coalition. During the election, the BN secured a substantial and uncomplicated majority, winning 133 of the 222 parliamentary seats. However, it is noteworthy that this victory was accompanied by a loss in the popular vote, marking the first such outcome.

The 14th Malaysian General Election (GE14) marked a historic regime transition, unprecedented since independence, and was one of the most contentious elections in Malaysian history. It also saw the return of Tun Mahathir Mohamad, whose leadership helped unify opposition coalitions and mobilise voters. As Ng et al. (2020)

note, the election's outcome was shaped by complex interactions between ethnicity and urban development, challenging simplistic narratives of a nationwide political shift. He contested the seat against the incumbent Barisan Nasional under the opposition Pakatan Harapan. The election result shocked everyone when the regime shifted from Barisan Nasional to Pakatan Harapan after six decades of rule. The Pakatan Harapan (PH) coalition emerged victorious in the parliamentary elections, securing 113 of the 222 seats. It was made possible by winning a simple majority; Barisan Nasional (BN) was voted out and managed to maintain only 79 parliamentary seats. There was also a concurrent shift in political power at the state level, predominantly in favour of the Pakatan Harapan (PH), leaving the Barisan Nasional (BN) with only two states - Pahang and Perlis. Pakatan Harapan (PH) ruled for twenty-two months before another milestone in the political landscape shook the country. "Langkah Sheraton," or the "Sheraton Move," in 2020 was a political coup d'état that led to the collapse of the Pakatan Harapan coalition government. The gathering took place at the Sheraton Hotel in Petaling Jaya, where representatives from six political parties convened to establish a new governing coalition.

The 15th Malaysian General Election (GE15), held in November 2022 amid global recovery from COVID-19, resulted in a hung parliament with no party securing a majority. Following five days of political deadlock and royal intervention, Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim was appointed Malaysia's 10th Prime Minister. As Wong (2023) notes, GE15 marked a departure from previous electoral cycles, reflecting deep fragmentation in the party system and ushering in a 19-party coalition government, the most complex in Malaysia's history. Initially, it is noteworthy that GE15 marked a departure from previous elections since there was no clear frontrunner or strong political entity. Throughout previous electoral cycles, including the notable 2018 elections, the Barisan Nasional (BN) has consistently emerged as the dominant alliance leading up to elections. During this period, three prominent coalitions were vying for power: Pakatan Harapan, led by Anwar Ibrahim; Barisan Nasional (BN), led by Zahid Hamidi; and Perikatan Nasional (PN), led by Muhyiddin Yassin. This election also marked the inaugural instance wherein the public actively sought political stability. Following the initial regime shift in 2018, Malaysia experienced a phase of political turbulence, culminating in the downfall of the PH government in 2020 and the establishment of a Perikatan Nasional (PN) government. The Perikatan Nasional (PN) administration, led by Muhyiddin Yassin from March 2020 to August 2021, dissolved and was succeeded

by a government led by the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), with Ismail Sabri assuming the position of Prime Minister. GE15 marked a significant milestone as about one-third of the total eligible voter population, which amounted to 21 million individuals, consisted of first-time voters (Wong, 2023). In 2019, legislative amendments were enacted to lower the minimum voting age from 21 to 18 and to implement automatic voter registration.

The number of young voters will grow dramatically in the coming years. Recognising its significance, the Malaysian government introduced a National Policy on Young Voters in 1997, dubbed the National Policy on Young Voters Development, and later renamed the Malaysian Young Voters Policy (MYP) in 2017. The policy served as a framework for the Malaysian government to plan and implement programs related to young voters. The MYP recognised young voters as catalysts for the country's development into a developed nation by 2035. In this research, young voters are defined as those aged 15 to 40, according to the Malaysian definition at the time of the survey. On July 3, 2019, the Young People Societies and Young People Development Act (Amendment) 2019 (Act 668) was changed. This made it possible for young people in Malaysia to vote at age 18. Over 87.24 per cent of 196 countries have an age limit of 18 to vote (Young People Policy 2020). This new definition of "young voters" in Malaysia includes more young people and allows them to exercise their political rights. The Constitution (Article 119 (1)(a) Amendment) Bill 2019 was enacted by Malaysia's lower house on July 16, 2019, lowering the voting age in national and state elections from 21 to 18 years. The inclusion of this target group in current political initiatives may help make policy processes more transparent and accountable to the younger generation, fostering a sense of citizenship among young voters (Mohamad et al., 2018). This redefinition situates Malaysia within the global movement toward expanding youth suffrage, making social media engagement a critical avenue for political inclusion.

Since political views and behaviours acquired at a younger age tend to persist into later life, academics have focused on social media's capacity to inspire young voters to engage in a range of political activities. It is crucial to understand how young voters use social media to learn about politics and voting, given that they constitute the majority of social media users and have integrated it into their everyday lives. Young voters appear to be swayed by several factors when selecting a candidate or political party. The factors encompassed personal occurrences concerning the candidate, the candidate's public perception, ongoing events pertaining to the electoral process,

concerns about various topics, support for specific policies, and religious convictions. Social media exerted a significant influence on the relationship between many factors that shape voters' decisions and their subsequent behavioural intentions. Young voters find themselves navigating a multifaceted era and context, which gives rise to disparities in terms of experiential backgrounds, cognitive capacities, and perspectives on various matters. The cognitive processes of young voters are susceptible to the proliferation of online information. The susceptibility of this population to external influences is heightened because of this phenomenon.

This research aimed to develop and validate an integrated model explaining how young voters' acceptance of social media influences their behavioural intention and ultimate voting decision. Drawing on the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) by Venkatesh et al. (2012) and the Model of Primary Voter Behaviour (Newman & Sheth, 1985), the research investigated how technological factors such as performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, facilitating conditions, hedonic motivation, and habit influence behavioural intention to participate politically via social media. The model further examined how this behavioural intention mediates the relationship between digital engagement and voter choice, while heuristic factors such as candidate image, current issues, and emotional responses contribute directly to voting behaviour. Additionally, the moderating role of prior experience is assessed in strengthening or weakening the intention-behaviour link. Ultimately, the research seeks to illuminate the dual pathways, technological and cognitive-affective, through which digital political participation shapes electoral participation in Malaysia's post-*Undi18* context.

This research adopted an integrated theoretical framework to examine the role of social media in shaping young voters' political behaviour. Specifically, this research applied the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2), developed by Venkatesh et al. (2012), to explore the key determinants of young voters' acceptance of social media as a tool for political participation. The research incorporates the Model of Primary Voter Behaviour by Newman and Sheth (1985), which emphasises affective and cognitive heuristics such as candidate image, issue salience, emotional responses, and current events to understand better how these digital behaviours translate into actual voting decisions. Synthesising these two models, the research offers a comprehensive understanding of how technological acceptance and voter evaluation processes jointly influence behavioural intention and voter choice. This

dual-theoretical approach enables the research to capture both the digital engagement patterns and psychological decision-making mechanisms that underpin young voters' political participation in Malaysia's evolving electoral landscape.

1.3 Problem Statement

In recent years, the conceptualisation of political participation has expanded beyond traditional electoral activities, such as voting and campaign involvement, to include digitally mediated forms of engagement (Theocharis & van Deth, 2017). The rise of social media has significantly transformed how citizens, particularly young voters, access political information, express opinions, and engage in political discourse (Boulianne & Theocharis, 2020; Jungherr et al., 2020). These platforms enable low-cost, interactive, and networked participation, making them especially relevant for younger generations who are more digitally inclined than older cohorts.

Despite this transformation, a critical paradox persists. While young voters are highly active in digital environments and frequently exposed to political content, this engagement does not consistently translate into meaningful political participation or informed voting behaviour. In the Malaysian context, this paradox has become increasingly significant following the implementation of *Undi18*, which expanded the youth electorate and positioned young voters as a decisive electoral group. Although survey findings suggest relatively high voter turnout in GE15, other evidence indicates persistent issues, including low political literacy, limited political motivation, and declining trust in political institutions (Merdeka Centre, 2022; 2024; Ng, 2022). Furthermore, young voters tend to engage with political content passively and incidentally, often avoiding direct or active participation (Kasmani, 2023). These patterns suggest that digital exposure alone is insufficient to explain political behaviour.

Existing research has extensively examined the role of social media in facilitating political engagement, including information seeking, online discussion, and mobilisation (Marquart et al., 2020; Ohme, 2019). However, much of this research focuses on observable online activities rather than the underlying psychological and behavioural mechanisms that shape voting decisions. There is limited empirical understanding of how young voters' acceptance of social media as a political tool influences their behavioural intentions and, in turn, their voting choices. This gap is

especially important in digitally saturated environments where exposure to political content is high, but its influence on decision-making remains unclear.

From a theoretical perspective, this limitation reflects a fragmentation between two dominant strands of research. Technology acceptance models, such as the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2), effectively explain users' intentions to adopt digital platforms but are rarely applied in political participation contexts. Conversely, voter behaviour models, such as Newman and Sheth's Model of Primary Voter Behaviour, provide robust explanations of how cognitive and affective factors influence voting decisions. However, they do not account for the role of digital technologies in shaping these processes. As a result, there is a lack of an integrated framework that explains how digital technology acceptance interacts with behavioural intention and translates into voter choice.

Empirically, studies applying UTAUT2 have predominantly focused on domains such as e-commerce, education, and e-government (Abbad, 2021; Naranjo-Zolotov et al., 2019), with limited attention to political contexts. Similarly, while research on youth political participation highlights the importance of social media, it often does not employ established technology acceptance models to explain user behaviour. This creates a dual gap: the absence of technology-driven explanations in voter behaviour research, and the limited application of acceptance models in political participation studies.

To address these gaps, this study examines how social media acceptance influences young voters' behavioural intention and voting choice in Malaysia. Specifically, this research develops and validates an integrated model that combines the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) with Newman and Sheth's Model of Primary Voter Behaviour. By linking technology acceptance constructs with cognitive-affective determinants of voting behaviour, the study provides a comprehensive explanation of how digital engagement translates into electoral decision-making among young voters.

Therefore, the originality of this study lies in integrating technology acceptance theory and voter behaviour theory into a unified analytical framework. This research extends UTAUT2 into a political communication context and enhances voter behaviour models by incorporating digital technology factors. In doing so, it offers both theoretical advancement and empirical insight into the role of social media in shaping political behaviour in Malaysia's post-GE15 environment.

1.4 Research Objectives

This research aimed to examine how social media acceptance influences young voters' behavioural intention and voting choice in Malaysia through an integrated framework of UTAUT2 and Newman & Sheth's Model of Primary Voter Behaviour. In line with the research aim, seven (7) research objectives were developed to guide the study. These objectives were designed to capture both the technological dimensions of social media acceptance and the cognitive-affective aspects of voter choice, reflecting the integrated framework of Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) and Newman & Sheth's Model of Primary Voter Behaviour.

Accordingly, the research first seeks to determine the level of young voters' acceptance of social media political participation (RO1). It then examines how Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) constructs such as performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, facilitating conditions, hedonic motivation and habit influence young voters' behavioural intention to use social media for political participation (RO2). The research further investigated the relationship between behavioural intention and voting choice (RO3) and examined the mediating role of behavioural intention in the link between social media acceptance and voter choice (RO4). Recognising that voting experience may affect behaviour, the research explored its moderating role in the relationship between behavioural intention and voter choice (RO5). In addition, the direct effects of Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) constructs on voter choice are tested (RO6). Finally, the research integrates these findings into a comprehensive model of young voters' choices (RO7) that reflects both technological acceptance and young voters' decision-making processes.

RO1 : To examine the overall level of young voters' acceptance of social media for political participation.

RO2 : To analyse the influence of social media performance expectancy (SMPE), social media effort expectancy (SMEE), social media social influence (SMSI), social media facilitating conditions (SMFC), social media hedonic motivation (SMHM), and social media habit (SMH) towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI).

RO3 : To analyse the direct influence of social media facilitating conditions (SMFC)

and social media habit (SMH) on voters' choice.

- RO4 : To analyse the mediating role of young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) between social media performance expectancy (SMPE), social media effort expectancy (SMEE), social media social influence (SMSI), social media facilitating conditions (SMFC), social media hedonic motivation (SMHM), and social media habit (SMH) and voters' choice.
- RO5 : To analyse whether social media political experience moderates the relationships between social media facilitating conditions (SMFC), social media hedonic motivation (SMHM) and social media habit (SMH) to young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI), as well as from social media habit (SMH) and young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) to voters' choice.
- RO6 : To analyse the influence of young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) on voters' choice.
- RO7 : To propose and validate an integrated model combining Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) and Newman & Sheth's Model of Primary Voter Behaviour for understanding young voters' electoral choices.

1.5 Research Question

In line with the research objectives, the following research questions were formulated to guide the research. These questions are designed to examine the technological acceptance of social media among young voters, the behavioural pathways leading to political intention, and the cognitive-affective factors shaping voting choice, consistent with the integration of Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) and Newman & Sheth's Model of Primary Voter Behaviour.

- RQ1 : What is the overall level of young voters' acceptance of social media for political participation?
- RQ2 : How do social media performance expectancy (SMPE), effort expectancy (SMEE), social influence (SMSI), facilitating conditions (SMFC), hedonic motivation (SMHM), and habit (SMH) influence young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) to use social media for political participation?

- RQ3 : Do social media facilitating conditions (SMFC) and social media habit (SMH) have a direct influence on voters' choice?
- RQ4 : Does young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) mediate the relationship between social media performance expectancy (SMPE), effort expectancy (SMEE), social influence (SMSI), facilitating conditions (SMFC), hedonic motivation (SMHM), and habit (SMH) and their electoral choice?
- RQ5 : Does social media political experience moderate the relationships between social media facilitating conditions (SMFC), social media hedonic motivation (SMHM) and social media habit (SMH) to young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI), as well as from social media habit (SMH) and young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) to voters' choice?
- RQ6 : Does young voters' behavioural intention directly influence their voting choice?
- RQ7 : Does the integrated model combining Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) and Newman & Sheth's Model of Primary Voter Behaviour demonstrate explanatory power for young voters' choice?

Building upon these research questions, a series of testable hypotheses was developed to provide empirical answers and validate the proposed framework. Each hypothesis corresponded directly to one or more research questions, thereby ensuring a clear alignment between the research's objectives, questions and analysis. Specifically, the hypothesis operationalises the relationships between Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) constructs, behavioural intention and voter choice, while also capturing the mediating role of behavioural intention and the moderating effect of voting experience. This systematic progression from objectives to questions and then to hypotheses ensures coherence across the research design. It provided a robust foundation for examining how social media acceptance shapes young voters' political behaviour in Malaysia. Hypotheses will be discussed further in Chapter 2 of this research.

1.6 Significance of Study

This research addressed a critical gap in understanding how digital platforms and technology acceptance factors influence the political behaviour of young Malaysian

voters, particularly within a context of declining political trust and growing socio-economic anxiety. Building on the theoretical integration of the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) and the Model of Primary Voter Behaviour, the research moved beyond descriptive accounts to offer a robust, empirically testable framework for understanding youth political behaviour in an increasingly digitised political sphere.

Situated within Malaysia's evolving electoral context, particularly after *Undi18* and the unprecedented youth surges in GE14 and GE15, this research offered an integrated, empirically testable framework for explaining how social media acceptance translates into voting choice. The purpose of this research is to explain how young Malaysian voters' acceptance of social media shapes their behavioural intention and voting choice through an integrated UTAUT2 and Newman-Sheth voter behaviour framework. Ultimately, this research clarified the digital pathways through which social media engagement influences electoral decision-making among young voters.

1.6.1 Theoretical Significance

This research contributed to the growing body of knowledge in political communication by integrating two established yet rarely combined theoretical models, the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) and the Model of Primary Voter Behaviour (Newman & Sheth, 1985). It adopted a dual-process approach to explain how technological acceptance factors, such as performance expectancy, effort expectancy, habit, and hedonic motivation, interact with cognitive and affective voter evaluations, such as epistemic issues, candidate image, emotional feelings, and current events. This theoretical integration advances understanding of young voters' political behaviour in digital contexts, especially in emerging democracies such as Malaysia. The model developed in this research contributes a novel framework for analysing how digital intentions translate into electoral decisions, which are mediated and moderated by both emotional and cognitive heuristics.

1.6.2 Empirical Significance

Despite growing academic interest in political participation and digital media, few studies focus on how young voters in Malaysia adopted social media specifically

for political decision-making. Most existing literature tends to explore online activism or general attitudes toward political content without connecting these behaviours with actual voting outcomes. This research addresses this empirical gap by examining the intention-to-behaviour link through a structured path model, supported by survey data from young voters. It offers an important perspective on what drives social media-based political participation and how this behaviour shapes real-world electoral choices, especially in a post-COVID and post-*Undi18* environment.

1.6.3 Practical and Stakeholder Significance

The practical and stakeholder significance of this research lies in its direct applicability to key actors within Malaysia's evolving political landscape—namely, political parties, young voters, and individual politicians. As digital media continue to redefine political communication and voter engagement, understanding the psychological and technological drivers of young voters' behavioural intentions is critical to effective democratic participation. The research contributes actionable insights that bridge theory and practice by identifying how constructs from the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2), including performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, facilitating conditions, hedonic motivation, and habit, interact with political communication processes to shape voter behaviour. Examining these dynamics in the context of Malaysia's young voters' and *Undi18* implementation, this research not only advances academic understanding but also provides practical frameworks for stakeholders to enhance digital campaigning strategies, civic engagement, and participatory policymaking. The subsequent subsections detail the specific implications for political parties, young voters, and politicians, highlighting how the research's findings can inform evidence-based practices that strengthen democratic responsiveness and inclusivity in the digital era.

1.6.3.1 Political Parties

In the recent General Elections, addressing the issue of online campaigning could make the difference between a candidate being elected and a political party achieving a majority. Young voters should become engaged in the political process in order to maintain the democratic form of government in which the people elect their

leaders. This research is expected to help political parties and candidates create more engaging political social media content that appeals to young voters. The findings of this research offered practical guidance for developing digital campaigns that align with young voters' ideals for political parties and campaign strategists. By identifying key predictors such as hedonic motivation, facilitating conditions, and emotional engagement, parties and politicians can tailor their content, platform use, and messaging strategies to better appeal to young voters. The research also highlights the role of social media habits and emotional resonance in shaping political intention, which can inform more effective political marketing strategies.

1.6.3.2 Young Voters

With the implementation of *Undi18*, political parties need to understand young voters' voting intentions and their acceptance of social media as a means of political participation. During elections, young people should no longer be dismissed as irrelevant. As this generation has grown older, its members have become increasingly critical to maintaining adult civic responsibilities, such as political involvement and voting. Now that political parties and candidates are paying attention to this generation, this research will provide insight into how to engage, excite, and encourage young people to vote. This research may not only urge elected officials to prioritise young voters, but also reveal whether social media is a useful strategy for increasing this generation's political participation.

1.6.3.3 Politicians

This research offered critical insights for politicians by identifying which dimensions of social media acceptance most significantly influence young voters' political behaviour. By empirically testing constructs from the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2), such as performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and hedonic motivation, the findings enabled political actors to prioritise the most impactful variables when designing voter engagement strategies. Politicians can use this knowledge to craft targeted political communication that aligns with the motivations and expectations of young voters,

especially through digital platforms where interaction is habitual and socially reinforced.

Notably, recent research has found that 77% of young voters relied on at least one social media or digital platform as a primary source of political information during the 2024 election cycle, and those with stronger media literacy skills were significantly more likely to vote (Siegel-Stechler et al., 2025). These findings reinforce the importance of digital platform acceptance and suggest that politicians who adopt accessible, credible, and interactive digital strategies are more likely to persuade and mobilise young voters. By recognising which constructs foster trust and sustained engagement, campaigners can not only enhance political participation but also strengthen long-term voter relationships.

1.6.4 Societal and Policy Significance

Beyond academic and political contexts, the findings of this research have implications for policy formulation and civic education initiatives. The insights derived from the behavioural patterns of young voters can be used by institutions such as the Election Commission of Malaysia, NGOs, and educational authorities to improve digital civic literacy, especially among first-time voters. Addressing political apathy, misinformation, and digital disengagement can help strengthen democratic participation and rebuild trust in electoral institutions among young voters. Furthermore, this research provides a foundation for developing data-driven outreach programs to enhance young voters' political participation.

1.6.5 Methodological Significance

Although the primary focus of this research is on its theoretical, empirical, and practical contributions, it also carries important methodological significance. The research employs a rigorous quantitative design using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) to analyse complex mediated and moderated relationships between social media use, behavioural intention, and voter choice. This research demonstrates the methodological value of PLS-SEM for predictive and theory-building studies in political communication by integrating constructs from both the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) and the Model of

Primary Voter Behaviour within a single analytical framework. Additionally, the adaptation and validation of a bilingual (English–Malay) survey instrument provide a replicable model for future research conducted in multicultural or emerging-democracy contexts such as Malaysia. These methodological strengths reinforce the research's overall reliability and extend its contribution beyond substantive findings to research design and analytical practice.

1.7 Operational Definitions

In the context of research, operational definitions are fundamental to ensuring clarity, precision, and replicability. In the context of political communication and technology acceptance, they serve to translate abstract theoretical constructs such as performance expectancy, political participation, and behavioural intention into observable, measurable variables (Clark et al., 2021). This approach not only enhances the precision of data collection but also strengthens the validity of the research's outcomes. Recent scholars continue to underscore the importance of well-defined constructs in behavioural research, especially when dealing with complex phenomena such as digital political engagement or social media influence (Hair, 2009).

In examining Malaysian young voters' political participation through social media platforms, this research integrates constructs from the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) and Newman & Sheth's Model of Primary Voter Behaviour to explore behavioural intentions and political participation.

The research ensures methodological rigour and facilitates robust analysis using structural equation modelling by operationally defining these constructs. This approach supports the investigation of mediation and moderation effects, particularly in understanding how social media platforms shape young voters' political participation. In essence, operational definitions are foundational components of research methodology, clarifying research objectives, enhancing data comparability, and facilitating empirical testing of theoretical constructs.

1.7.1 Social Media Performance Expectancy (SMPE)

Performance expectancy is the "degree to which an individual believes that using the system will help him or her to attain gains in job performance" (Venkatesh,

Morris, Davis & Davis, 2003, p.447). It is anticipated that a user's performance will improve when utilising technology for a specific activity. The present framework was derived from previous models, including the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Combined Technology Acceptance Model and Theory of Planned Behaviour (C-TAM-TPB), as well as the Motivational Model (MM), the Model of Perceived Compatibility and Usefulness (MPCU), the Innovation Diffusion Theory (IDT), and the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) (Venkatesh et al., 2003). When using social media to learn and read political news, young voters can expect benefits such as saving time, easy access, and usefulness. Social Media Performance Expectancy (SMPE) is divided into four categories: usefulness in work, increased likelihood of achieving important outcomes, faster accomplishment, and increased productivity (Venkatesh et al., 2003).

1.7.2 Social Media Effort Expectancy (SMEE)

Performance expectancy is the degree of ease associated with using the system (Venkatesh et al., 2003). This construct was measured using four questions, which prior research had shown to reflect respondents' perspectives in this area. The present framework was derived from previous models that encompass the concepts of anticipated effort, perceived ease of use (Technology Acceptance Model), ease of use (Information Display Theory), and complexity (Multiple Perspectives on Computer Use) (Venkatesh et al., 2003). If a user believes the technology is simple to use, they may have a higher level of acceptance of the new technology. In this research, if young voters perceived using social media to participate in politics as easy, this could encourage their intention to use social media for political participation. Social Media Effort Expectancy (SMEE) is divided into four categories: learning how to use is easy, interaction is clear, it is easy to use, and it is easy to become skilled (Venkatesh et al., 2003).

1.7.3 Social Media Social Influence (SMSI)

Social influence is the extent to which an individual believes that significant others expect him or her to use the system (Venkatesh et al., 2003). It represents the social pressure from family, friends, and others to accept new technologies. The present framework was derived from previous models and directly influenced the intention to

use. These models include the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), Combined TAM-TPB (C-TAM-TPB), as well as social factors (MPCU) and image (IDT) (Venkatesh et al., 2003). In this research, politically engaged young voters with strong social ties who utilise the latest online technologies might be influenced in their decision to use them. Social Media Social Influence (SMSI) can be divided into four categories: family influence, friends influence, and management influence (Venkatesh et al., 2003).

1.7.4 Social Media Facilitating Condition (SMFC)

Facilitating conditions are defined as the degree to which an individual believes that an organisational and technical infrastructure exists to support the use of the system (Venkatesh et al., 2003). It represents the required items and support needed to use social media. This construct was obtained from its predecessors, which are direct determinants of intention to use and actual use: facilitating conditions (MPCU), compatibility (IDT), and perceived behavioural control (TPB, C-TAM-TPB) (Venkatesh et al., 2003). For political participation through social media, facilitating conditions for young voters would include smartphones, the Internet, tablets, and computers. There are four categories of Social Media Facilitating Condition (SMFC): availability of resources, internet connection, technology compatibility, and availability of assistance.

1.7.5 Social Media Hedonic Motivation (SMHM)

Hedonic Motivation is a theoretical construct that measures a user's perceived amusement value of the technology (Venkatesh et al., 2012). It refers to the enjoyment or pleasure derived from using technology and has been shown to influence technological acceptability and use significantly. For some consumers, using something novel and inventive may be exhilarating and engaging. In this research, young voters will intend to use social media if they perceive it as fun, enjoyable, and entertaining.

1.7.6 Social Media Habit (SMH)

The concept of habit has been operationalised in two distinct ways: first, as past behaviour (Kim & Malhotra, 2005), and second, as the extent to which an individual acts spontaneously or automatically due to learning (Limayem et al., 2007). As users gain experience and familiarity with a technology, habit formation may emerge, influencing both their intention to use and actual use behaviour. In this research, young voters' habitual exposure to political content on social media, whether driven by routine, addiction, or necessity, is expected to shape their behavioural intentions. Young voters' behavioural intention was predicted by social media use habits, social media addiction, the perceived need to use social media, and the naturalisation of social media use.

1.7.7 Young Voters' Behavioural Intention (YVBI)

Behavioural intention indicates an individual's readiness to perform a given behaviour. It is assumed to be an immediate antecedent of behaviour (Ajzen, 2002). Within the framework of the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2), behavioural intention was utilised to predict whether users would utilise a particular system or technology (Venkatesh et al., 2012). It uses behavioural intention to predict whether young voters will use social media for political participation by examining their intention to continue using social media, use it in daily life, and use it more frequently.

1.7.8 Voting Issues and Policies (VIP)

A combination of concerns and policies encompasses significant topics and guiding ideas across four distinct domains: economic policy, foreign policy, social policy, and leadership characteristics. The aforementioned factors serve as indicators of the candidate's perceived value, particularly with respect to the logical or practical objectives of their platform. The evaluation of this element is conducted by utilising a benefits profile (Newman & Sheth, 1985).

1.7.9 Voting Emotional Feelings (VEF)

Emotional feelings constitute the affective component of the voting process, specifically sentiments such as optimism, responsibility, and patriotism evoked by a candidate (Newman & Sheth, 1985). These components were measured by the sentiments of voters who are unaffected by a candidate's personality, as they may base their opinions solely on the candidate's proposed policies. Alternatively, a voter may possess knowledge about the candidate's personality but remain indifferent towards it.

1.7.10 Voting Candidate Image (VCI)

Candidate image refers to the perception of a candidate based on salient personality attributes that are supposed to provide insight into the candidate's qualities and characteristics. This component is derived from a personality profile that assesses one or more characteristics of the candidate's perceived image. The measurement of this component was based on a personality trait profile that encompasses one or more dimensions of the candidate's image (Newman & Sheth, 1985).

1.7.11 Voting Epistemic Issues (VEI)

Epistemic issues concerned the justifications that would support the perceived fulfilment of curiosity, the acquisition of knowledge, and the fulfilment of exploratory demands presented by the candidate as a means of introducing novelty or differentiation. This component is measured based on a profile of epistemic concerns. It is assumed that it possesses a unidimensional nature (Newman & Sheth, 1985).

1.7.12 Voting Social Imagery (VSI)

The concept of social imagery encompasses primary and secondary reference groups that are inclined to support the candidates. Perceptions of these candidates are influenced by their associations with various demographic, social, cultural/ethnic, and political/ideological aspects of society, which can lead to the formation of positive or negative stereotypes (Newman & Sheth, 1985). The mental image of a politician held by a voter is influenced by various factors, including demographic, social,

cultural/ethnic, or political/ideological affiliations, which might shape their inclination to support a particular candidate.

1.7.13 Voting Personal Events (VPE)

Personal events are circumstances in an individual's life that may prompt a voter to change their voting preference in favour of an alternative candidate. The candidate garners utility or value for the voter because of specific personal or familial circumstances that precede the voter's deliberation. The measurement of this component is based on a selected set of contingencies that indicate one or more dimensions of the candidate's conditional utility (Newman & Sheth, 1985).

1.7.14 Voting Current Events (VCE)

Current events refer to the "campaign dynamics" that encompass the range of topics and ideas that emerge and evolve throughout a political campaign (Newman & Sheth, 1985). These dynamics encompass both domestic and international factors that may influence a voter's decision to move their support from one candidate to another. The candidate derives value from adopting specific issue positions and policy stances that affect various circumstances. The measurement of this component is based on a selected set of contingencies that indicate one or more dimensions of the conditional utility of a candidate.

1.7.15 Young Voters

Young voters in this research were defined as those aged 18 to 40 years, with 40 years as the upper limit defined in the Malaysia Youth Policy (MYP) by the Ministry of Youth and Sports Malaysia (2017). The bill lowering the minimum voting age from 21 to 18 was passed in July 2019 and first implemented during the Johor state election in February 2022. However, the terms 'youth' or 'young people' are retained when they reflect the terminology and age definitions used by the original authors.

1.8 Thesis Scope

This section outlines the scope and delimitations of the research. The research specifically examines how young voters' engagement with social media platforms influences their political behaviour, particularly focusing on behavioural intentions and actual voting choices within the context of the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) (Venkatesh et al., 2012) and the Model of Primary Voter Behaviour (Newman & Sheth, 1985).

The methodological approach is quantitative, employing online and face-to-face survey data collected via stratified sampling from young voters aged 18–40 in Selangor. The geographical boundary of this research is limited to urban areas in Malaysia. It is justified by greater digital connectivity and social media use. Theoretically, the research excludes broader sociopolitical and psychological theories unrelated to voter behaviour or technology acceptance.

These delimitations ensure that the analysis remains focused on the key factors affecting young voters' digital political participation. It is to remain consistent with the theoretical frameworks used.

1.9 Summary of Chapter 1

Chapter 1 established the foundation of the research on how social media acceptance influences young Malaysian voters' behavioural intention and voting choice, using an integrated framework combining the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) (Venkatesh et al., 2012) and the Model of Primary Voter Behaviour (Newman & Sheth, 1985). This chapter begins with an overview of social media use across different aspects of people's lives worldwide, then focuses on its use in a political context. Social media has been used for political participation over the past decade, but research on its effects on voting has not been comprehensive.

This research aimed to examine how social media acceptance influences young voters' behavioural intention and voting choice in Malaysia through an integrated framework of UTAUT2 and Newman & Sheth's Model of Primary Voter Behaviour. The chapter situates the research in Malaysia's post-*Undi18* and GE15 political landscape, where young voters have emerged as decisive "kingmakers." It highlights that although young voters are digitally active, the mechanisms linking their social

media use to actual political participation remain underexplored. The research addresses this gap by examining how six social media acceptance factors such as Social Media Performance Expectancy (SMPE), Social Media Effort Expectancy (SMEE), Social Media Social Influence (SMSI), Social Media Facilitating Conditions (SMFC), Social Media Hedonic Motivation (SMHM), and Social Media Habit (SMH), affect Young Voters' Behavioural Intention (YVBI) and, ultimately, Voter's Choice (comprising of seven subdimensions: Issues and Policies, Emotional Feelings, Candidate Image, Epistemic Issues, Social Imagery, Personal Events, and Current Events). Seven (7) research questions were developed to guide the research.

The problem statement underscores the limited empirical work on the link between technology acceptance and voting behaviour, particularly among young Malaysian voters, despite the extensive use of platforms such as TikTok and Instagram in elections. The objectives and research questions translate this into seven structured inquiries that explore direct, mediating, and moderating effects, with a particular focus on experience as a moderator. Young people have historically had a tough time voting because they distrust the political system. If more political participation remains an objective, this scepticism and lack of political participation must be addressed and rectified.

The final section of this chapter discusses the significance of the research and operational definitions of all constructs. Understanding young voters is critical, especially given the government's recent *Undi18* announcement. This chapter presents a general introduction to the research. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the literature on social media and several platforms used in political activity. Chapter 3 describes the methodology and research design. Information on the general population, sampling procedure, instrument selection, instrument validity and reliability, data collection methods, and data analysis is also discussed in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 presents measurement and structural results; Chapter 5 interprets the findings in light of theory and the Malaysian context, with theoretical, practical, and policy implications; and, lastly, Chapter 6 concludes with contributions, limitations, and directions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The research studies selected for this literature review focused on social media use and its effects on young people's voting intentions. A multitude of electronic databases were used to search and collect relevant peer-reviewed articles and research studies. These databases included ProQuest, Sage Premier, Scopus, ScienceDirect and Google Scholar. The keywords used in this literature review included social media, social media and young people, social media and politics, political participation, social media, young voters, voting and voters turnout, voting behaviour, political content on social media, effects of social media usage in politics, Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) and Model of Primary Voter Behaviour.

The following organisational websites were referred to: Ministry of Communications and Multimedia, Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, Election Commission of Malaysia, Department of Statistics Malaysia, Viswanath Venkatesh's website, Facebook, TikTok, and Twitter. The date range for this research was set to works published in the last 5 years to ensure that reasonably current research was included. However, certain studies included in the literature review are over 5 years old, providing historical context and insights into the topic. Most of the articles and journals were downloaded from the Universiti Teknologi MARA library's online database, and the rest were found via Google. This literature review is valuable because it provides the constructs examined for this research and the effects of social media on young voters' intentions. Young voters' social media usage is studied, along with political content on social media, the changing nature of political parties' use of social media, and social media's effects on voting behaviour.

2.2 Evolution of Social Media

Social media has evolved from basic communication tools into complex digital ecosystems that shape how individuals access information, construct identities, and

engage in social and political discourse. Early forms of online interaction, such as email systems and bulletin board services, provided limited opportunities for information exchange (Singhmar, 2023). However, the emergence of Web 2.0 marked a significant shift toward participatory communication, enabling users not only to consume but also to produce and disseminate content.

The development of platforms such as SixDegrees, MySpace, and Facebook institutionalised networked communication by allowing users to construct digital identities and maintain social connections at scale (Bojor & Cîrdei, 2022; Özhan, 2022). This transition is particularly significant in the context of political communication, as it transformed audiences from passive recipients of political messages into active participants in disseminating and interpreting information.

Subsequent platforms, including Twitter and Instagram, further redefined communication dynamics by emphasising immediacy and visual engagement. Twitter, for instance, enabled real-time political communication and played a central role in political mobilisation during events such as the Arab Spring (Zabidi & Wang, 2021). These developments highlight the increasing role of social media as a tool for political engagement, particularly among younger populations who are more digitally embedded.

Despite these advancements, existing literature presents mixed findings regarding the impact of social media on political participation. While some studies suggest that social media enhances political awareness and engagement, others argue that such participation is often superficial and does not necessarily translate into meaningful political outcomes. This divergence indicates that the relationship between social media usage and actual voting behaviour remains insufficiently explained.

Moreover, the shift toward mobile-first platforms such as TikTok and Snapchat has intensified user engagement through algorithm-driven, personalised content (Singhmar, 2023). These platforms prioritise entertainment and emotional appeal, which may influence how political information is consumed and interpreted. This is particularly relevant in the context of young voters, whose political engagement is increasingly shaped by digitally mediated experiences.

Beyond political communication, social media has been widely studied in domains such as marketing, education, and psychology. Research highlights its role in enhancing consumer engagement, facilitating collaborative learning, and influencing social relationships (Grover et al., 2022; Irshaid, 2020). However, these studies often

examine social media use in isolation, without sufficiently addressing how digital engagement translates into political decision-making.

Importantly, concerns surrounding misinformation, data privacy, and psychological effects further complicate the role of social media in shaping public opinion (Mougharbel et al., 2023; Sundaram et al., 2021). These challenges underscore the need for a more comprehensive theoretical framework that can explain not only how individuals engage with social media, but also how such engagement influences their political attitudes and behaviours.

Therefore, while the evolution of social media demonstrates its growing significance in contemporary communication, existing research remains fragmented in its explanation of its role in electoral decision-making. This highlights the need for an integrated approach that connects digital engagement with voter behaviour, particularly among young voters who rely heavily on social media as a primary source of political information.

2.3 Social Media Political Participation

Social media has emerged as a central mechanism for political participation in contemporary digital societies, reshaping how individuals engage with political processes, access information, and mobilise collective action. Its influence extends across both democratic and authoritarian contexts, affecting voting behaviour, political discourse, protest movements, and the dissemination of political information (Zhuravskaya et al., 2020).

A substantial body of research suggests a positive relationship between social media usage and political engagement. Meta-analytic evidence indicates that digital media use is associated with increased participation in civic and political activities, particularly among younger populations (Boulianne, 2020). Social media platforms enable users to transition from passive information consumers to active participants in political discourse through activities such as sharing, commenting, and engaging in online campaigns (Sjoraida et al., 2024; Kharel, 2024).

However, this relationship is not straightforward. While social media facilitates engagement, its ability to translate online participation into offline political behaviour remains contested. Studies have shown that online political engagement does not necessarily lead to increased offline participation, raising questions about the depth and

effectiveness of digital political involvement (Yang et al., 2020). Furthermore, the direction of causality remains unclear, as politically active individuals may be more likely to engage with social media rather than social media driving political participation itself (Boulianne & Theocharis, 2020).

Platform-specific dynamics further complicate this relationship. While platforms such as Twitter and Facebook have been linked to increased political discussion and affective polarisation, others such as TikTok and Instagram demonstrate different patterns of engagement, often driven by visual and entertainment-oriented content (Oden & Porter, 2023). These variations suggest that political participation in digital environments is shaped not only by access to technology but also by platform affordances and user motivations.

Empirical evidence from global contexts reinforces the role of social media in political mobilisation. For instance, digital platforms played a significant role in organising protests during the Hong Kong movement and facilitated youth political engagement in Kenya and Nigeria (Xinyue, 2023; Macharia & Ong'ong'a, 2024; Benaiah & Osuntoki, 2024). These cases demonstrate the capacity of social media to amplify political voices and enable grassroots mobilisation. However, they also highlight the context-dependent nature of digital political participation.

Despite these contributions, social media also introduces significant challenges. The proliferation of misinformation, algorithm-driven echo chambers, and unequal access to credible information complicate the quality of political engagement (Barnidge & Xenos, 2021; Tariq et al., 2022). These factors may distort political perceptions and influence voter decision-making in ways that are not fully understood.

Importantly, existing studies predominantly focus on the extent of political participation rather than the mechanisms through which social media engagement translates into electoral decision-making. While research has established that social media can increase political activity, there remains limited theoretical integration explaining how digital engagement influences voting behaviour.

This limitation is particularly significant for young voters, who are highly active on social media yet exhibit diverse patterns of political participation. Current literature does not adequately explain how factors such as perceived usefulness, social influence, or habitual social media use contribute to political intention and, ultimately, voting choice.

Therefore, there is a need for an integrated framework that connects social media engagement with voter behaviour. This research addresses this gap by integrating technology acceptance constructs into voter decision-making processes, offering a more comprehensive explanation of how digital political participation translates into electoral outcomes.

2.4 Social Media Use in Malaysia

The rapid expansion of social media in Malaysia has fundamentally transformed how information is accessed, consumed, and disseminated, particularly among young voters. With 92.7% of Malaysians identified as internet users and 94.1% actively engaging with social media, digital platforms have become a dominant source of information (Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, 2022). Recent data further indicates that nearly half of Malaysians rely on social media as their primary news source, with platforms such as TikTok, Facebook, and YouTube playing a central role in shaping public discourse (Reuters Institute, 2025). This shift reflects a broader transition from traditional media to algorithm-driven, mobile-based information environments.

Within the Malaysian political context, social media assumes an even more significant role due to structural limitations in traditional media systems. Historically, mainstream media has been closely associated with the ruling coalition, limiting the diversity of political perspectives available to the public (Wok & Mohamed, 2017). As a result, social media platforms have emerged as alternative spaces for political expression, enabling opposition voices and grassroots movements to engage more directly with the electorate (Omar & Ahrari, 2020). This transformation has contributed to the decentralisation of political communication, where information flows are no longer controlled solely by institutional actors.

Among young Malaysians, social media is deeply embedded in everyday communication practices and serves as a primary channel for accessing political information. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter facilitate not only social interaction but also exposure to political content, civic discussions, and issue-based engagement (Omar et al., 2019; Tan, 2022). This aligns with broader trends in digital political communication, where younger cohorts are more likely to engage with politics through personalised and interactive online environments.

However, despite the widespread use of social media and its recognised role in shaping political awareness, its influence on actual voting behaviour remains unclear. While existing studies demonstrate that social media enhances political engagement and information exposure, they do not sufficiently explain how such engagement translates into electoral decision-making. This is particularly relevant in Malaysia, where young voters represent a significant and growing electoral group following the implementation of *Undi18*.

Furthermore, the Malaysian digital environment presents additional complexities, including the proliferation of misinformation, algorithm-driven content exposure, and varying levels of digital literacy (Azlan et al., 2020; Yong & Sia, 2021). These factors may influence how political information is interpreted and acted upon, potentially shaping voter perceptions and choices in ways that existing models of political participation do not fully capture.

Therefore, while social media plays a critical role in shaping political engagement in Malaysia, current research remains limited in explaining the mechanisms through which social media usage influences voting decisions. This highlights the need for a more comprehensive theoretical framework that integrates technology acceptance factors with voter behaviour processes. By focusing on young Malaysian voters, this study seeks to address this gap and provide a more nuanced understanding of how digital engagement translates into electoral choice.

2.5 Social Media Use among Young Voters in Malaysia

The increasing integration of social media into everyday life has positioned young voters as a digitally embedded cohort whose political engagement is closely intertwined with online platforms. Compared to previous generations, young individuals demonstrate higher levels of technological proficiency and are more inclined to incorporate social media into routine communication, information consumption, and social interaction. The accessibility, interactivity, and entertainment-oriented nature of these platforms further facilitate their widespread adoption among youth.

Social media serves multiple functions for young users, ranging from socialisation and identity formation to information acquisition and civic engagement (Manago et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2021). Within the political domain, these platforms

provide an accessible space for exposure to political content, discussion, and participation. Empirical studies indicate that young voters actively engage in political activities through social media, including sharing information, participating in discussions, and mobilising support for causes (Ahmad et al., 2019; Yamamoto et al., 2020).

In the Malaysian context, social media plays a particularly significant role in shaping youth political engagement. Studies show that young Malaysians rely heavily on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to access political information and participate in civic discourse (Mamat et al., 2022; Tan, 2022). The frequency of social media use further amplifies this effect, as prolonged exposure to political content enhances awareness and interest in political issues (Ting & Ahmad, 2021). During election periods, this engagement intensifies, with youth increasingly consuming political information and participating in online discussions (Abdullah et al., 2021).

Moreover, social media has contributed to the emergence of new forms of political participation among Malaysian youth, including digital activism, online campaigning, and issue-based advocacy. The 2018 General Election demonstrated the potential of social media to mobilise young voters and facilitate political discourse outside traditional media channels (Tan, 2022). These developments suggest that social media is not only a communication tool but also a significant driver of youth political engagement.

Despite the high levels of social media use and engagement among young voters, existing research has several limitations. While studies consistently report a positive relationship between social media use and political participation, they largely focus on descriptive patterns of engagement rather than the underlying mechanisms that drive such behaviour. Specifically, there is limited understanding of how young voters' interactions with social media translate into behavioural intention and, ultimately, voting decisions.

Additionally, the role of individual perceptions—such as perceived usefulness, social influence, and habitual usage—in shaping political engagement remains underexplored in the Malaysian context. This gap is particularly important given that young voters' engagement with social media is often driven by both utilitarian and hedonic motivations, which may influence their political behaviour in distinct ways.

Furthermore, challenges such as misinformation and varying levels of media literacy complicate the relationship between social media use and political participation.

While social media may increase exposure to political information, it does not necessarily ensure informed or rational decision-making (Chan et al., 2021; Fadzil et al., 2022). This suggests that the impact of social media on voting behaviour cannot be fully understood without considering the cognitive and behavioural processes underlying user engagement.

Therefore, although social media is widely recognised as a key driver of youth political participation, existing studies remain limited in their ability to explain how such engagement translates into electoral decision-making. This highlights the need for a theoretically grounded framework that can capture both the technological and behavioural dimensions of social media use among young voters. By incorporating technology acceptance constructs and linking them to voter behaviour, this study seeks to provide a more comprehensive explanation of how social media influences young voters' behavioural intention and voting choice.

2.6 Social Media Platform Trend

The increasing diversification of social media platforms has significantly reshaped patterns of political communication and participation, particularly among younger populations. Rather than functioning as a uniform communication channel, social media platforms operate as differentiated digital environments, each characterised by distinct affordances, interaction logics, and content structures. These differences play a critical role in shaping how political information is disseminated, interpreted, and acted upon (Nielsen & Fletcher, 2020; Abid et al., 2023).

Empirical research consistently demonstrates that social media platforms facilitate political engagement, including exposure to information, online expression, and mobilisation. However, the extent to which such engagement translates into offline political participation remains uneven and context-dependent. Studies suggest that exposure to political content through digital platforms is associated with increased political awareness and participation, particularly among digitally literate users, but these effects vary across platforms and are mediated by factors such as trust, perceived credibility, and the broader political environment (Martin, 2016; Nielsen & Fletcher, 2020; Alhaimer, 2023).

A key dimension in understanding platform trends is the concept of platform heterogeneity. Different platforms serve distinct political functions. For example,

network-based platforms such as Facebook and Twitter facilitate political discussion and information sharing. In contrast, visually oriented platforms such as Instagram and TikTok emphasise affective and entertainment-driven engagement. Messaging platforms such as WhatsApp enable rapid dissemination of information within closed networks, often amplifying peer influence and informal political communication. These structural differences suggest that political engagement on social media is not uniform but is shaped by platform-specific affordances and user interaction patterns (Martin, 2016; Nielsen & Fletcher, 2020).

Beyond functional differences, contemporary literature highlights the role of platform governance and power structures in shaping political participation. Social media platforms are not neutral intermediaries; they actively shape the visibility of information through algorithms, moderation policies, and advertising systems. The increasing role of targeted political advertising and data-driven campaigning introduces concerns regarding manipulation, narrowcasting, and unequal access to political information. These dynamics reflect broader power asymmetries among platforms, advertisers, and users, with implications for democratic participation and deliberation (Reisach, 2021; Griffin, 2022; Hill, 2024).

Another critical factor is trust and perceived credibility, which have been identified as key determinants of user engagement with political content. Users are more likely to interact with and act upon political information when it is perceived as credible and trustworthy. However, the prevalence of misinformation and the fragmented nature of digital information environments complicate this process, potentially undermining informed political participation (The Influence of Political Messages on User Engagement within Social Media Environments, 2019; Zaiter et al., 2023).

Despite these insights, existing literature on social media platform trends remains largely platform-centric, focusing on structural features, content dynamics, and macro-level participation patterns. Less attention has been paid to how individual users interpret and evaluate these platforms, and how such perceptions influence their willingness to engage in political activities (Abid et al., 2023).

This limitation is particularly important in the context of young voters, whose interactions with social media are shaped not only by platform features but also by their perceptions of usefulness, ease of use, social influence, and enjoyment. These factors are central to technology acceptance frameworks but remain underexplored within political communication research.

Therefore, while prior studies establish that social media platforms influence political participation, they do not sufficiently explain the mechanisms through which platform characteristics are internalised by users and translated into behavioural intention. Addressing this gap requires a theoretical approach that accounts for user perceptions and motivational factors. Accordingly, this study adopts a technology acceptance perspective to examine how social media platform characteristics influence young voters' behavioural intention and, subsequently, their voting decisions.

2.6.1 Facebook Use in Political Activity

Facebook remains one of the most influential social media platforms in shaping political communication and participation, particularly among young voters. As a network-based platform, Facebook enables the dissemination of political information, peer interaction, and large-scale mobilisation, positioning it as a central space for digital political engagement.

Empirical studies consistently demonstrate that exposure to political content on Facebook is positively associated with political engagement, including participation in discussions, sharing of political information, and involvement in civic activities (Sbai et al., 2023; Kim & Ellison, 2021). In the Malaysian context, Facebook played a significant role during the 2018 General Election, serving as a key channel for disseminating political information and mobilising youth (Ali & Salleh, 2020). This suggests that Facebook is not merely a communication tool but an active environment that shapes political awareness and participatory behaviour.

However, the influence of Facebook on political engagement is not uniform and is mediated by several factors. One critical factor is selective exposure, in which users tend to engage with content that aligns with their preexisting beliefs. This dynamic reinforces ideological homogeneity and contributes to the formation of echo chambers, limiting exposure to diverse perspectives (Moretto et al., 2022; Jain & Pandey, 2023). As a result, while Facebook increases political engagement, it may simultaneously intensify political polarisation.

Another key mechanism is social influence, which operates through network interactions and peer behaviour. Users are more likely to engage with political content when it is endorsed or shared within their social networks, highlighting the role of interpersonal communication in shaping political participation (Bäck et al., 2020). This

aligns with broader findings that social media platforms amplify social cues, making political engagement a socially reinforced behaviour.

In addition, perceived credibility and trust play a significant role in determining the extent of political engagement on Facebook. Users who perceive political content as credible are more likely to participate in civic activities and engage with political discourse (Alfred & Wong, 2022). Conversely, exposure to misinformation and low-quality content may undermine trust and reduce meaningful engagement, highlighting Facebook's dual role as both an enabler and a constraint on democratic participation.

Importantly, Facebook has been shown to enhance both internal and external political efficacy, particularly among young users. Engagement with political content on the platform can increase individuals' confidence in their ability to understand political issues and influence political outcomes (Hassan et al., 2021). This suggests that Facebook contributes not only to participation but also to the psychological conditions necessary for political involvement.

Despite these contributions, the existing literature remains largely focused on observable outcomes, such as participation and engagement, with limited attention to the underlying mechanisms driving these behaviours. In particular, there is insufficient emphasis on how users' perceptions of Facebook—such as its usefulness for political information, ease of use, social influence, and enjoyment—shape their behavioural intention to engage in political activities.

This limitation is critical, as Facebook's impact on political participation is not determined solely by its structural features but also by how users interpret and experience the platform. Therefore, understanding Facebook's role in political activity requires a theoretical approach that accounts for user perceptions and motivational factors. In this regard, technology acceptance frameworks provide a useful lens to examine how Facebook use translates into behavioural intention and, ultimately, influences voting behaviour.

2.6.2 Twitter Use in Political Activity

Twitter (recently rebranded as X) has emerged as a distinctive platform in political communication due to its capacity for real-time information dissemination, public discourse, and direct interaction between political actors and citizens. Unlike other social media platforms, Twitter operates as a microblogging environment that

combines mass communication with interpersonal engagement, enabling users to broadcast concise political messages to wide audiences while simultaneously participating in ongoing political conversations.

A key feature of Twitter is its role in agenda-setting and political visibility. Political actors, including politicians, journalists, and activists, use the platform to shape public discourse through trending topics, hashtags, and viral content. This enables rapid amplification of political messages and increases responsiveness between leaders and citizens (Gilardi et al., 2021; Neyazi et al., 2022). As a result, Twitter enables a more immediate and interactive form of political communication than traditional media.

Twitter also plays a significant role in political mobilisation and activism. The platform facilitates the coordination of collective action by enabling users to share information, organise events, and mobilise support around political causes. Studies have shown that Twitter is particularly effective during periods of political unrest and election campaigns, serving as a tool for grassroots mobilisation and civic participation (Jafari & Jafari, 2022). However, participation on Twitter tends to be concentrated among politically active and ideologically engaged users, suggesting that its effects may not extend equally across all segments of the population.

Another important mechanism is direct interaction and personalisation. Twitter allows political elites to engage directly with citizens through replies, mentions, and endorsements, fostering a sense of accessibility and relational connection (Russell, 2021). This personalised communication style enhances user engagement and may strengthen political interest and participation, particularly among younger users who value interactive, immediate communication.

Despite these advantages, Twitter also contributes to political polarisation and selective exposure. The platform's algorithmic structure and user behaviour often reinforce exposure to like-minded content, limiting engagement with opposing viewpoints and intensifying ideological divisions (Kharel, 2024). In addition, the presence of opinion leaders, including celebrities and influencers, further shapes political discourse by amplifying particular narratives and influencing public opinion (Wahab et al., 2022).

The role of emotional expression and sentiment is another distinguishing feature of Twitter. Political messages on the platform are often concise, emotionally charged, and rapidly circulated, which can influence public opinion and electoral behaviour. Sentiment-driven communication has been shown to affect voter perceptions and

engagement, highlighting the importance of affective responses in digital political environments (Khan et al., 2023).

However, Twitter's openness and speed also create vulnerabilities, particularly regarding misinformation and content manipulation. The rapid spread of unverified information can distort political understanding and influence voter perceptions, raising concerns about the quality of political discourse on the platform (Munger et al., 2020). These challenges underscore the complex role of Twitter as both an enabler of democratic participation and a source of informational risk.

In the Malaysian context, Twitter has become an important platform for youth political engagement, enabling access to political information, participation in public discourse, and expression of political opinions (Abdullah et al., 2021). Its role in shaping political awareness and engagement among younger users reflects broader global trends in digital political communication.

Despite the extensive literature on Twitter's role in political communication, existing studies primarily focus on observable outcomes such as engagement, mobilisation, and discourse patterns. Less attention has been given to how users' perceptions of Twitter, such as its usefulness, ease of use, social influence, and emotional appeal, shape their behavioural intention to engage in political activities.

This gap is particularly significant, as Twitter's influence on political participation is mediated not only by its structural features but also by how users interpret and experience the platform. Therefore, understanding Twitter's role in political activity requires a framework that accounts for user perceptions and motivational factors. In this regard, technology acceptance models provide a useful lens to explain how engagement with Twitter translates into behavioural intention and, ultimately, influences voting behaviour.

2.6.3 TikTok Use in Political Activity

TikTok has emerged as a highly influential platform in contemporary political communication, particularly among younger voters. Unlike traditional social media platforms, TikTok is driven by algorithmically curated content and short-form video formats, which prioritise visual storytelling, emotional appeal, and rapid content consumption. These features reshape how political messages are produced,

disseminated, and interpreted, positioning TikTok as a distinctive environment for political engagement.

A defining characteristic of TikTok is its role in entertainment-driven political engagement, often described as “playful activism.” The platform integrates political content with trends, challenges, and creative expression, allowing users to engage with political issues in informal, relatable, and highly shareable ways (Cervi & Divon, 2023; Cervi et al., 2023). This blending of entertainment and politics lowers barriers to participation and encourages broader engagement, particularly among youth who may be less responsive to traditional forms of political communication.

TikTok also facilitates user-generated political expression and participatory culture. Hashtag-driven campaigns and viral content enable users to actively contribute to political discourse, transforming them from passive audiences into content creators. This participatory structure enhances visibility and amplifies political messages, contributing to increased awareness and, in some cases, offline political engagement (Literat & Kligler-Vilenchik, 2023; Moffett & Rice, 2023).

Another key mechanism is the role of influencers and social endorsement in shaping political communication. Political actors increasingly collaborate with influencers and adopt informal communication styles to connect with younger audiences. These strategies enhance relatability and credibility, making political content more accessible and engaging. In the Malaysian context, the 15th General Election (GE15) has been characterised as a “TikTok Election,” where political parties leveraged influencers and platform-specific content strategies to mobilise young voters (Krishnamoorthy, 2022; Rodzi, 2022). This reflects a shift toward personalised and socially mediated political communication.

However, TikTok’s algorithmic structure also introduces challenges related to selective exposure and information quality. The platform’s recommendation system prioritises content based on user preferences and engagement patterns, which may reinforce existing beliefs and limit exposure to diverse perspectives (Hautea et al., 2021). Additionally, the emphasis on short-form, entertainment-oriented content raises concerns about the depth and quality of political discourse, potentially encouraging superficial engagement over critical deliberation (Quick & Maddox, 2024).

The role of emotional and affective engagement is particularly pronounced on TikTok. Political content is often designed to evoke emotions, using humour, music, and visual effects to capture attention and encourage sharing. This affective dimension

enhances engagement but may also influence how political information is processed and interpreted, potentially prioritising emotional resonance over informational accuracy.

Despite its growing importance, existing literature on TikTok and political engagement remains largely focused on observable patterns of participation, such as content creation, sharing, and mobilisation. Less attention has been given to how users' perceptions of TikTok, such as its usefulness for political information, its ease of use, the influence of social networks, and its entertainment value, shape their behavioural intention to engage in political activities.

This limitation is particularly significant given TikTok's strong emphasis on hedonic motivation and habitual use, which are central constructs in technology acceptance frameworks. As such, understanding TikTok's role in political activity requires a theoretical approach that accounts for how users internalise platform features and translate them into behavioural intention.

Therefore, this research adopted a technology acceptance perspective to examine how TikTok use influences young voters' behavioural intention and, ultimately, their voting decisions, particularly within the context of Malaysia's digitally driven electoral environment.

2.7 Social Media Political Participation

Political participation in Malaysia has undergone a significant transformation, particularly during the 14th General Election (GE14) and 15th General Election (GE15). These elections marked a shift from traditional forms of participation toward more digitally mediated engagement, reflecting broader changes in the political communication environment.

GE14 marked a critical turning point in Malaysian politics, in which widespread dissatisfaction with governance issues, particularly the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) scandal, contributed to increased public engagement and electoral mobilisation (Maksum, 2020; Ng et al., 2022; Tan, 2021). Digital platforms played a crucial role in amplifying political discourse, enabling the dissemination of alternative narratives and facilitating citizen engagement beyond the constraints of traditional media.

Following GE14, Malaysia experienced a period of political instability characterised by coalition realignments and leadership changes. This environment

heightened political awareness and engagement, as citizens increasingly relied on digital media to access information, interpret political developments, and participate in public discourse (Nor et al., 2023; Welsh, 2020).

A significant development in GE15 was the implementation of *Undi18*, which expanded the electorate by incorporating younger voters into the political process. This shift not only increased the numerical significance of youth voters but also transformed the nature of political participation. Political actors adapted by intensifying their use of social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and X to engage younger audiences through targeted and platform-specific communication strategies (Wenxuan & Osman, 2023; Noorman et al., 2024).

These developments reflect a broader conceptual shift in political participation from institutional and offline activities toward digitally mediated and expressive forms of engagement. Social media platforms enable new modes of participation, including content sharing, online discussions, political expression, and networked mobilisation. These forms of engagement are often more immediate, personalised, and accessible, particularly for younger voters.

However, digital political participation is not without challenges. The increasing fragmentation of political discourse, driven by algorithmic curation and identity-based narratives, has contributed to political polarisation and selective exposure (Hamid & Zawawi, 2023; Saidin & Azrun, 2024). At the same time, the rapid spread of misinformation raises concerns about the quality of political engagement and the integrity of democratic processes.

Despite these challenges, social media has enhanced young voters' political agency, enabling them to access information, express opinions, and participate in political processes more actively than in previous electoral cycles. This shift highlights the growing importance of understanding how digital environments influence political behaviour, particularly in emerging democracies.

Nevertheless, existing research on political participation in Malaysia has predominantly focused on structural and contextual factors, such as electoral dynamics, institutional changes, and media environments. Limited attention has been given to the individual-level mechanisms that drive participation, particularly how users' perceptions of social media platforms influence their intention to engage in political activities.

This gap is critical, as participation in digital environments is not determined solely by access or exposure but also by how individuals evaluate and interact with these technologies. Therefore, a technology acceptance perspective is necessary to explain how social media usage translates into behavioural intention and, ultimately, political participation.

In this regard, the present research integrates technology acceptance constructs with voter behaviour frameworks to examine how social media acceptance shapes young voters' behavioural intention and influences their voting decisions within Malaysia's evolving political landscape.

2.8 Voters' Choice in Election Campaign

Voter choice in election campaigns is a complex and multidimensional process influenced by cognitive, emotional, social, and contextual factors. Traditional models of voting behaviour emphasise rational evaluation of issues and policies; however, contemporary research suggests that electoral decisions are increasingly shaped by a combination of informational, affective, and social influences, particularly in digitally mediated environments.

One key dimension influencing voter choice is cognitive evaluation, which involves voters' assessment of political information, issues, and policy positions. Political knowledge and awareness play a critical role in shaping electoral decisions, as informed voters are more likely to make consistent and decisive choices (Gherghina & Rusu, 2021). In the Malaysian context, increased access to political information through social media platforms has enhanced voters' ability to evaluate candidates and policy alternatives, particularly during high-stakes elections such as GE14.

In addition to cognitive factors, emotional and affective influences significantly shape voter behaviour. Political campaigns increasingly utilise emotionally resonant narratives to engage voters, particularly younger audiences. Emotional appeals, including hope, anger, and identity-based messaging, enhance message salience and influence voter perceptions of candidates (Chatterjee & Dutta, 2024). Social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram amplify these effects by prioritising visually engaging and emotionally driven content, which can shape attitudes and preferences in subtle but impactful ways (Karimi & Fox, 2023; Noorman et al., 2024).

Another critical dimension is social and relational influence, where interpersonal networks, peer discussions, and social endorsement shape voters' choices. Campaign strategies that involve direct engagement, influencer participation, and community-based mobilisation can enhance voter trust and participation (Juelich & Coll, 2021). Among young voters, social media platforms serve as key spaces for exchanging opinions and collectively interpreting political events, reinforcing the role of social influence in electoral decision-making.

Voter choice is also influenced by campaign communication strategies, particularly the use of targeted and personalised messaging. Political advertising that is relatable and aligned with voters' concerns, such as employment, education, and social justice, has been shown to increase engagement and strengthen voter-candidate alignment (Lau et al., 2021; Basinillo et al., 2024). However, generic or poorly targeted messaging may fail to translate engagement into actual voting behaviour, highlighting the importance of strategic communication design (Unan et al., 2024).

Despite these influences, youth political participation remains characterised by a paradox of apathy and mobilisation. While young voters are often perceived as disengaged from traditional political processes, evidence suggests that they can be highly responsive during critical political moments. For instance, the surge in voter registration during GE13 and the significant role of youth in GE14 indicate that mobilisation is contingent on contextual and motivational factors (Mohd Hariszuhan, 2014; Mohd Hed & Grasso, 2020).

Importantly, the rise of digital media has transformed the mechanisms through which voter choice is formed. Social media platforms not only provide access to political information but also shape how that information is interpreted through algorithmic filtering, social interaction, and content personalisation. This has led to a more dynamic and interactive decision-making process, in which voters actively shape their political preferences through continuous engagement with digital content.

However, existing literature on voter choice has predominantly focused on external influences such as campaign strategies, media exposure, and demographic factors. Less attention has been given to the internal decision-making processes that translate exposure into actual voting behaviour, particularly in digital environments.

This limitation is significant, as voter choice is not determined solely by exposure to political content but also by individuals' behavioural intention to engage with it and act on it. Behavioural intention serves as a critical mechanism linking social

media engagement to electoral decision-making, particularly among young voters who rely heavily on digital platforms for political information.

In this regard, the present research integrates technology acceptance constructs with voter behaviour theory to examine how social media acceptance influences behavioural intention and, in turn, shapes voter choice. By incorporating multidimensional aspects of voter decision-making, this study provides a more comprehensive understanding of electoral behaviour in the context of Malaysia's evolving digital political landscape.

2.9 Theory

Theory in quantitative research provides a systematic explanation of the relationships between constructs, enabling researchers to predict and interpret behavioural outcomes. In this study, theory serves as the foundation for understanding how social media acceptance influences young voters' behavioural intention and, subsequently, their voting decisions.

Given the increasing integration of digital technologies into political communication, this research adopted a technology acceptance perspective to explain how individuals engage with social media platforms in political contexts. Among the various models developed to explain technology adoption, the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) provides the most comprehensive framework by synthesising key constructs from earlier behavioural and technological theories.

2.9.1 Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT)

The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), developed by Venkatesh et al. (2003), represents one of the most comprehensive models for explaining technology adoption and usage behaviour. It was formulated through the integration of eight prominent theoretical frameworks, including the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), Motivational Model (MM), Model of PC Utilisation (MPCU), Innovation Diffusion Theory (IDT), and Social Cognitive Theory (SCT).

Rather than treating these theories independently, UTAUT consolidates their key constructs into a unified framework, thereby addressing the limitations of earlier models that focused on isolated dimensions of behaviour. For instance, TRA and TPB emphasised attitudinal and normative influences on intention, while TAM focused primarily on perceived usefulness and ease of use. Similarly, IDT contributed insights on innovation characteristics, and SCT introduced cognitive and affective determinants such as self-efficacy and outcome expectations.

UTAUT synthesises these contributions into four core determinants of behavioural intention and usage behaviour: performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions. Performance expectancy reflects the extent to which individuals believe that using a technology will enhance their performance, drawing from perceived usefulness and relative advantage. Effort expectancy captures the perceived ease of use, while social influence reflects the impact of social norms and peer expectations. Facilitating conditions represent the availability of resources and support necessary for technology use.

A key strength of UTAUT lies in its superior explanatory power. Venkatesh et al. (2003) demonstrated that the model explains up to 70% of the variance in behavioural intention, outperforming earlier models that typically accounted for between 17% and 53%. This makes UTAUT particularly well-suited to analysing behaviour in complex, dynamic environments, such as digital platforms.

In addition, UTAUT incorporates moderating variables including age, gender, experience, and voluntariness of use, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of how different user groups interact with technology. This feature is particularly relevant for young voters, whose engagement with social media is shaped by varying levels of digital experience and exposure.

The selection of UTAUT in this study is grounded in its ability to explain technology-mediated behaviour within socially embedded environments, such as social media platforms used for political engagement.

First, political participation among young voters is increasingly facilitated through digital platforms, making technology acceptance a critical determinant of engagement. Unlike traditional voter behaviour models, UTAUT explicitly accounts for how individuals evaluate and interact with technology, providing a more appropriate framework for analysing digital political participation.

Second, UTAUT offers a more comprehensive explanatory structure than earlier models such as TAM and TPB. While TAM focuses primarily on perceived usefulness and ease of use, and TPB emphasises intention through attitudinal and normative factors, UTAUT integrates these dimensions with social and contextual influences. This is particularly important in social media environments, where behaviour is shaped by peer influence, platform accessibility, and habitual usage.

Third, the constructs within UTAUT align closely with the characteristics of social media platforms. For example, social influence reflects peer interactions and network effects, while facilitating conditions capture access to digital infrastructure. These elements are critical in understanding how young voters engage with political content online.

Finally, UTAUT provides a strong foundation for examining behavioural intention as a mediating mechanism, which is central to this study. Behavioural intention serves as the link between social media acceptance and voter choice, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of how digital engagement translates into electoral decision-making. Figure 2.1 shows the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) model by Venkatesh et al. (2003).

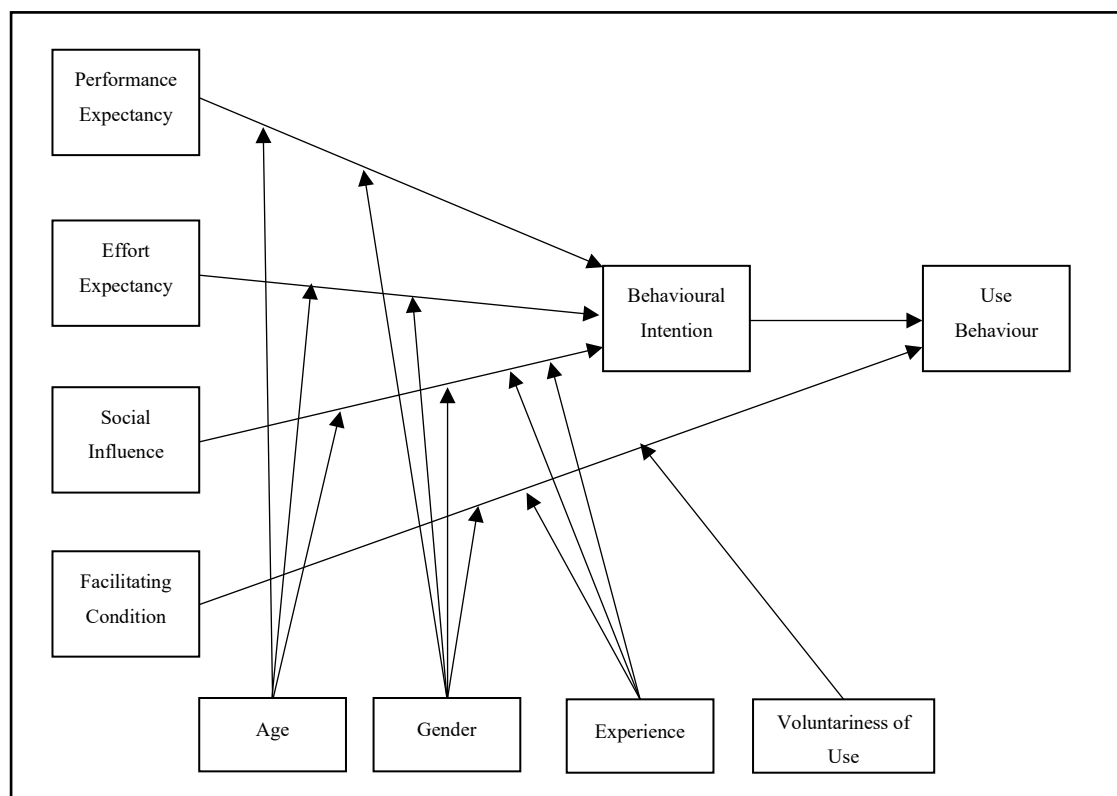


Figure 2.1 Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) model by Venkatesh et al. (2003)

2.9.2 The extended Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2)

The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) represent one of the most comprehensive frameworks for explaining technology adoption by integrating cognitive, social, and behavioural determinants (Venkatesh et al., 2012). Building on the original UTAUT (Venkatesh et al., 2003), UTAUT2 extends the model beyond organisational contexts into consumer environments by incorporating hedonic motivation, price value, and habit. This extension is particularly relevant for understanding voluntary, everyday technology use, such as social media, where use is driven not only by utility but also by enjoyment and routine behaviour.

Empirical applications of UTAUT2 across diverse domains, including automated vehicles (Nordhoff et al., 2020), mobile health applications (Schomakers et al., 2022), and digital health portals (Ravangard et al., 2017), demonstrate its robustness in predicting behavioural intention. Central to the model is the assumption that behavioural intention serves as a strong predictor of actual usage, allowing researchers to infer future behaviour from cross-sectional data (Alalwan et al., 2017). This predictive capability is particularly valuable in the context of social media, where behavioural intention can be conceptualised as a precursor to sustained political engagement.

However, despite its empirical strength, UTAUT2 has been critiqued for its contextual generality. Scholars argue that while the model is theoretically comprehensive, its constructs may not fully capture domain-specific motivations without adaptation (Schomakers et al., 2022). This limitation is especially evident in political communication contexts, where technology use is intertwined with ideological, emotional, and civic factors rather than purely functional or hedonic motivations. As such, the direct application of UTAUT2 to political participation requires conceptual refinement.

One key debate concerns the inclusion of price value. While price value is theoretically significant in consumer decision-making (Herrero et al., 2017; Puriwat & Tripopsakul, 2021), its relevance diminishes in contexts where technologies are freely accessible, such as social media platforms. Empirical evidence suggests that price value does not significantly influence behavioural intention in such environments (Tamilmani et al., 2018). Consequently, excluding this construct enhances model parsimony and

contextual validity when examining social media adoption. This study follows this approach by omitting price value, focusing instead on constructs that are more theoretically aligned with digital political engagement.

More importantly, UTAUT2 remains fundamentally a technology acceptance model, designed to explain usage behaviour rather than decision outcomes. In political contexts, this presents a conceptual limitation. While UTAUT2 effectively explains why young voters adopt social media for political purposes, it does not account for how such adoption translates into voter choice, which involves evaluative, affective, and contextual considerations. This gap is particularly critical given that political decision-making is shaped by multidimensional factors such as candidate image, emotional resonance, and issue evaluation, as conceptualised in voter behaviour models (Newman & Sheth, 1985).

Within the Malaysian context, this limitation becomes more pronounced. Young voters are highly active on social media platforms, yet their digital engagement does not automatically translate into electoral decisions. The distinction between technology acceptance (UTAUT2) and political choice behaviour highlights a theoretical fragmentation in existing literature. While UTAUT2 explains how and why social media is used, it does not explain how this usage influences voting decisions. This disconnect justifies the need for theoretical integration.

Therefore, this research extends UTAUT2 into a political communication context by repositioning behavioural intention as a mediating mechanism between social media acceptance and voter choice. Constructs such as performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, facilitating conditions, hedonic motivation, and habit are adapted to apply to social media use for political participation. In doing so, the model shifts from a purely technological framework to a socio-political behavioural model.

Furthermore, this research incorporates experience as a moderating variable, consistent with UTAUT2's original formulation, to account for differences in digital familiarity among young voters. This is particularly relevant in the Malaysian context, where variations in digital literacy and exposure to political content may influence how acceptance of social media translates into political intention.

In summary, while UTAUT2 provides a strong theoretical foundation for understanding social media adoption, its application in political contexts requires adaptation and integration. By extending UTAUT2 and linking it to voter behaviour

theory, this study addresses a critical gap in the literature by bridging the divide between digital acceptance and electoral decision-making. The proposed framework, therefore, offers a more comprehensive explanation of young voters' behaviour in contemporary, social media-driven electoral environments, as illustrated in the research framework. Figure 2.2 shows the UTAUT2 model from "Consumer Acceptance and Use of Technology: Extending the Unified Theory of Acceptance by Venkatesh, Thong and Xu (2012)

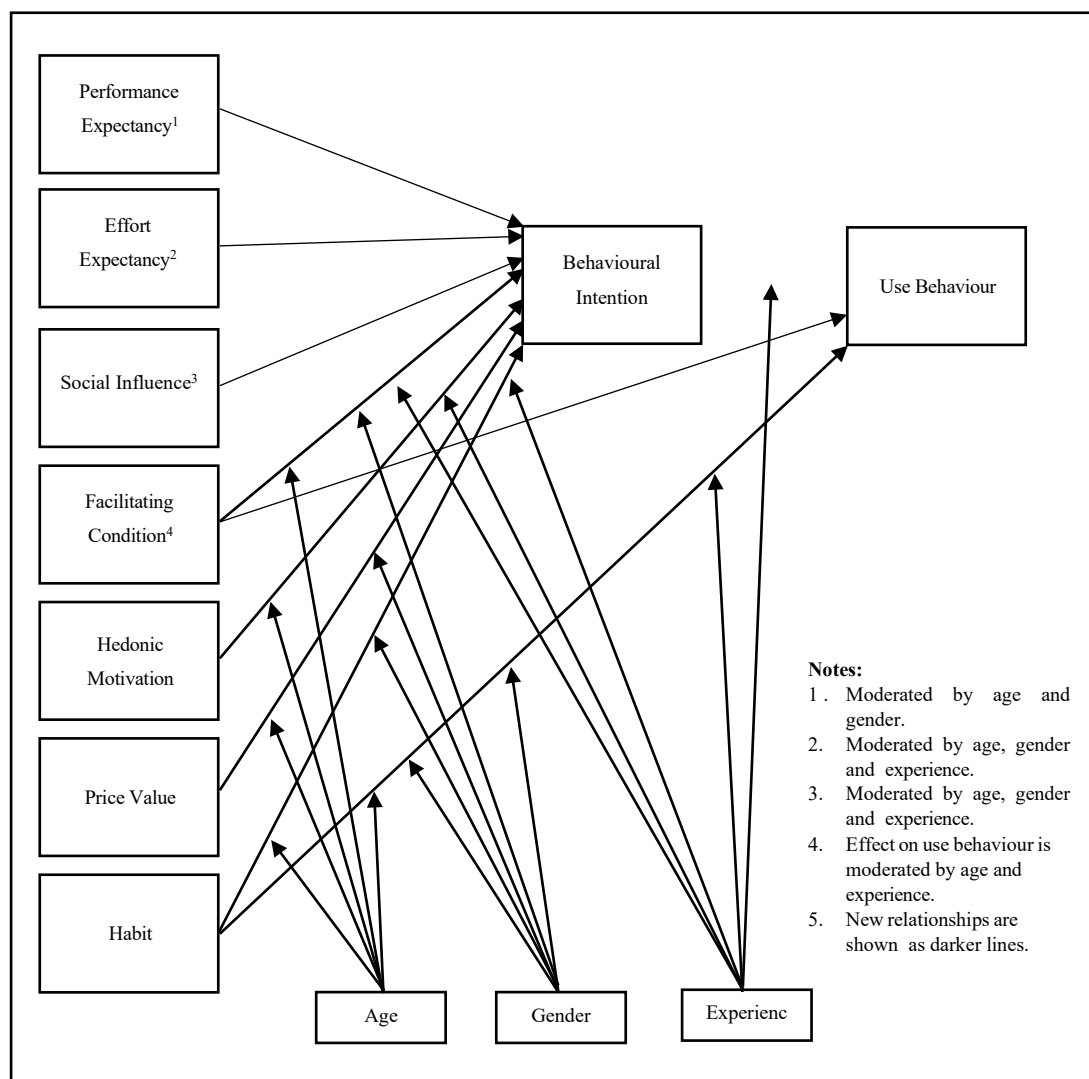


Figure 2.2 UTAUT2 model from "Consumer Acceptance and Use of Technology: Extending the Unified Theory of Acceptance by Venkatesh, Thong and Xu (2012)

2.9.2.1 Social Media Performance Expectancy (SMPE)

Performance expectancy, defined as the degree to which individuals believe that using a system will enhance their performance (Venkatesh et al., 2003), remains the most consistently validated predictor of behavioural intention within the UTAUT and UTAUT2 frameworks (Venkatesh et al., 2012). In digital environments, this construct reflects users' evaluation of the instrumental value of technology, specifically, whether social media enhances efficiency, access to information, and task accomplishment.

Empirical research across domains consistently supports the centrality of performance expectancy. In educational contexts, studies demonstrate that students are more likely to adopt social media when they perceive it as ~~enhancing~~ enhancing learning outcomes and information accessibility (Gharrah & Aljaafreh, 2021; Hermita et al., 2023). Similarly, in organisational and entrepreneurial settings, performance expectancy is linked to improved communication, collaboration, and productivity (Dantas et al., 2022; Rizkalla et al., 2023). These findings collectively reinforce the argument that perceived utility remains a dominant driver of technology adoption across contexts.

However, existing literature also highlights a critical tension within performance expectancy. While social media is often associated with enhanced performance, excessive usage can lead to fatigue, distraction, and reduced productivity (Bukhari et al., 2020; Malik et al., 2020). This paradox suggests that performance expectancy is not a static perception but is dynamically shaped by users' experiences and outcomes. Expectation-confirmation theory further supports this view, demonstrating that continued engagement depends on the alignment between expected and actual performance outcomes (Ferreira et al., 2021). When expectations are not met, disengagement may occur, indicating that performance expectancy operates as both a motivator and a potential point of disconfirmation.

Within the context of political communication, the role of performance expectancy extends beyond functional utility to encompass civic relevance. Social media platforms reduce informational barriers, enabling young voters to access political content efficiently and in real time (Chan & Yi, 2024). This accessibility enhances political awareness and facilitates engagement, positioning social media as a practical tool for political participation. Studies have shown that when users perceive social media as effective for acquiring political knowledge and expressing opinions, their

likelihood of engaging in political activities increases (Akinyetun, 2022; Omotayo & Folorunso, 2020).

Nevertheless, a key limitation in existing research is the tendency to conceptualise performance expectancy primarily in non-political contexts, such as education and workplace productivity. While these studies provide valuable insights into technology adoption, they do not fully capture how perceived utility translates into electoral behaviour. In political settings, performance is not limited to task efficiency but includes broader outcomes such as political efficacy, awareness, and decision-making capability. Empirical evidence suggests that social media enhances political efficacy and voting intention, particularly among first-time voters (Hassan et al., 2021). However, the mechanism through which perceived utility influences voter choice remains underexplored.

This gap is particularly relevant in the Malaysian context, where young voters rely heavily on social media for political information. While platforms provide convenience and accessibility, their impact on electoral decision-making depends on whether users perceive them as credible, useful, and relevant to their political needs. Thus, performance expectancy must be reconceptualised not only as technological utility but also as perceived political usefulness.

Accordingly, this study operationalises social media performance expectancy (SMPE) as the extent to which young voters believe that using social media enhances their ability to access political information, understand political issues, and engage in civic processes. Within the proposed framework, SMPE is hypothesised to influence young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI), which subsequently shapes their voting choices. By positioning behavioural intention as a mediating mechanism, this study extends the explanatory power of performance expectancy from technology adoption to political decision-making.

In summary, while prior research confirms the significance of performance expectancy in driving technology use, its role in political contexts remains insufficiently theorised. By integrating SMPE into a broader voter behaviour framework, this research addresses this limitation and contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of how perceived digital utility influences electoral outcomes.

2.9.2.2 Social Media Effort Expectancy (SMEE)

Effort expectancy refers to the degree to which individuals perceive a technology as easy to use, requiring minimal cognitive and physical effort (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Within the UTAUT2 framework, effort expectancy is traditionally conceptualised as a key determinant of behavioural intention, particularly in the early stages of technology adoption, where usability and interface simplicity influence users' willingness to engage (Venkatesh et al., 2012).

A substantial body of empirical research supports the role of effort expectancy in shaping technology adoption. Studies across organisational and commercial contexts demonstrate that systems perceived as user-friendly are more likely to be accepted and trusted. For instance, Subhani et al. (2023) found that effort expectancy significantly influences adoption intention in enterprise systems, while Fedorko et al. (2021) showed that ease of use enhances performance expectancy, suggesting an interdependent relationship between usability and perceived utility. Similarly, meta-analytic evidence confirms that effort expectancy remains a consistent predictor of behavioural intention across various technological contexts (Tamilmani et al., 2020).

However, more recent studies introduce an important nuance to this relationship. In digitally mature environments, effort expectancy may lose its predictive strength. Duong et al. (2023), for example, found that effort expectancy did not directly influence behavioural intention to use AI tools, although it interacted with performance expectancy. This suggests that as users become more technologically proficient, ease of use is no longer a decisive factor but rather a baseline expectation. In such contexts, users prioritise the utility and value of technology over its usability.

This shift is particularly relevant in the context of social media. Unlike complex enterprise systems, social media platforms are designed to be inherently intuitive, requiring minimal effort to navigate and interact. Consequently, effort expectancy may exhibit diminishing explanatory power in predicting behavioural intention among digitally fluent populations, such as young voters. This argument aligns with Realpe-Muñoz et al. (2018), who noted that while ease of use facilitates initial engagement, it does not necessarily sustain long-term usage when users are already familiar with the technology.

In political communication contexts, the role of effort expectancy becomes even more complex. Social media platforms provide seamless access to political content

through algorithmically curated feeds, reducing the effort required to encounter political information (Hernandez, 2019). This low-effort environment enables passive forms of political engagement, such as scrolling, liking, and sharing. However, such ease of access does not necessarily translate into deeper cognitive engagement or active political participation (Matthes, 2022). This highlights a critical distinction between accessibility and meaningful engagement, suggesting that effort expectancy may facilitate exposure but not necessarily meaningfully influence behavioural intention.

Further research integrating UTAUT2 with Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) reinforces this perspective. Chiu et al. (2024) demonstrated that while ease of use influences initial engagement with digital content, sustained interaction is more strongly driven by gratification factors, such as entertainment, relevance, and emotional resonance. This indicates that effort expectancy operates as a hygiene factor necessary but not sufficient for continued engagement.

The Malaysian context provides additional support for this argument. Young voters, who are highly experienced social media users, are unlikely to perceive effort as a barrier to usage. Instead, their engagement is more likely to be influenced by factors such as social influence, hedonic motivation, and the perceived usefulness of political content. This suggests that effort expectancy may not be a significant determinant of behavioural intention within this demographic.

Accordingly, this study conceptualises social media effort expectancy (SMEE) as the perceived ease of using social media platforms to access political information and participate in political activities. Within the proposed framework, SMEE is hypothesised to influence young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI). However, based on theoretical and empirical considerations, its effect is expected to be limited in contexts where users are already digitally proficient.

This position is empirically supported by the findings of this study, where SMEE did not significantly influence behavioural intention. This result reinforces the argument that for digitally native populations, ease of use is no longer a differentiating factor but a taken-for-granted condition of platform engagement.

In summary, while effort expectancy remains an important construct in technology acceptance theory, its relevance is context dependent. In the case of social media use among young voters, effort expectancy plays a diminishing role, highlighting the need to prioritise other motivational and social factors in explaining digital political participation.

2.9.2.3 Social Media Social Influence (SMSI)

Social influence refers to the extent to which individuals perceive that important others, such as peers, family members, or societal groups, expect them to use a particular technology (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Within the UTAUT2 framework, social influence captures the normative pressures that shape behavioural intention, particularly in socially embedded technologies such as social media.

In digital environments, however, social influence extends beyond traditional interpersonal expectations. It encompasses a broader networked structure, including peer interactions, online communities, influencers, and algorithmically amplified content, all of which shape users' perceptions and behaviours. This expanded conceptualisation is particularly relevant in the context of political communication, where social media platforms function not only as information channels but also as spaces of social validation and opinion formation.

A growing body of empirical research demonstrates that social media significantly enhances political participation by facilitating interaction, discussion, and exposure to diverse viewpoints. For instance, Bogale and Kibret (2023) found that adolescents actively use social media to circulate civic messages, fostering a sense of collective identity and civic competence that strengthens their intention to participate politically. Similarly, Arabani et al. (2022) reported that positive perceptions of social networking environments significantly influence youth voting attitudes, suggesting that behavioural intention is shaped not only by individual cognition but also by social endorsement and peer validation.

The accessibility of political content further amplifies this influence. Social media platforms enable users to engage with political discourse without reliance on traditional media gatekeepers, thereby increasing exposure to political narratives and alternative viewpoints (Bamidele et al., 2024). In the Malaysian context, Tan (2020) demonstrated that such exposure plays a critical role in shaping youth political attitudes, particularly during periods of political transformation. This indicates that social influence operates through both direct interpersonal interaction and indirect exposure to socially curated content.

Moreover, empirical evidence suggests that social influence is particularly salient among young and first-time voters. Naidu et al. (2023) found that frequent social media use enhances engagement with political parties, while Hassan et al. (2021)

showed that social media interaction strengthens political efficacy and voting intention. Marijan and Sahab (2020) further argued that digital platforms exert greater influence on novice voters than traditional media, reflecting a shift in political socialisation processes from institutional to networked environments.

However, the nature of social influence in digital contexts is complex. While increased exposure to political content can enhance engagement, it may also lead to echo chambers and the reinforcement of opinions, where users are primarily exposed to like-minded views. This raises concerns about whether social influence promotes critical deliberation or merely amplifies existing beliefs. Friehe et al. (2020) highlighted that while access to diverse media can strengthen democratic engagement, the quality and diversity of exposure remain critical determinants of meaningful participation.

In the context of this research, social media social influence (SMSI) is conceptualised as the extent to which young voters are influenced by their social networks, online communities, and digital interactions when using social media for political purposes. Within the proposed framework, SMSI is hypothesised to significantly influence young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI), which subsequently affects voter choice.

This conceptualisation is empirically supported by the findings of this study, where SMSI emerged as one of the strongest predictors of behavioural intention. This result underscores the central role of social environments and networked interactions in shaping political engagement among young voters, particularly in digitally mediated contexts.

In summary, while traditional models conceptualise social influence as interpersonal pressure, its role in social media contexts is more expansive and dynamic. This study advanced the understanding of how networked communication environments shape political behaviour, reinforcing the importance of SMSI within the integrated model by incorporating both social and technological dimensions of influence.

2.9.2.4 Social Media Facilitating Conditions (SMFC)

Facilitating conditions refer to the extent to which individuals perceive that the necessary technical and organisational infrastructure exists to support the use of a system (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Within the UTAUT2 framework, this construct

traditionally reflects the availability of resources, compatibility, and support mechanisms that enable technology use. In the context of social media, facilitating conditions extend beyond technical infrastructure to include platform accessibility, connectivity, digital literacy, and the availability of political content ecosystems.

Existing literature generally supports the role of facilitating conditions in enabling technology adoption. Studies suggest that when users perceive sufficient support, such as reliable internet access, intuitive interfaces, and accessible content, they are more likely to engage with digital platforms (Puriwat & Tripopsakul, 2021). In political contexts, social media platforms serve as enabling environments that reduce barriers to accessing information, allowing young voters to engage with political content more efficiently (Deddy et al., 2023). This aligns with broader arguments that digital infrastructures democratise access to political knowledge and participation.

However, the role of facilitating conditions in shaping behavioural intention is less consistent than that of other UTAUT2 constructs. While facilitating conditions provide the necessary environment for engagement, they do not inherently motivate individuals to participate. Instead, they function as enablers rather than drivers of behaviour. This distinction is critical in understanding their role in social media-based political participation.

Empirical studies indicate that facilitating conditions are more closely associated with actual behaviour or outcomes rather than intention. Chiparausha et al. (2022), for example, demonstrated that access to digital tools enhances engagement only when users are already motivated to participate. Similarly, Abid and Harrigan (2020) highlight that while social media provides spaces for political expression, meaningful engagement depends on users' motivations and perceived relevance of content rather than infrastructure alone.

In the context of political communication, facilitating conditions can be reconceptualised as the structural affordances of social media platforms—including algorithmic content distribution, interactive features, and network connectivity—that shape how users encounter and engage with political information. These affordances influence not only access but also how political narratives are constructed, disseminated, and internalised.

Importantly, facilitating conditions also intersect with issues of digital inequality and media literacy. While social media platforms are widely accessible, disparities in digital competencies and critical evaluation skills can limit users' ability to engage with

political content effectively. This suggests that the presence of facilitating conditions does not guarantee meaningful participation; rather, it creates the potential for engagement, which other motivational factors must activate.

Within the Malaysian context, where social media penetration is high among youth, facilitating conditions are largely taken for granted. Young voters typically possess the necessary access and technical skills to use social media platforms, reducing the salience of facilitating conditions as a determinant of behavioural intention. Instead, these conditions operate in the background, supporting rather than driving engagement.

Accordingly, this study conceptualises social media facilitating conditions (SMFC) as the perceived availability of technological and structural support that enables young voters to access political information and participate in digital political activities. Within the proposed framework, SMFC is hypothesised to influence both behavioural intention (YVBI) and voter choice.

The findings of this study provide important theoretical insight. SMFC was found to have no significant effect on behavioural intention, but a significant direct effect on voter choice. This suggests that while facilitating conditions do not motivate young voters to engage with social media, they play a crucial role in shaping how political information is accessed and evaluated during the decision-making process. In other words, facilitating conditions influence how choices are formed, rather than whether engagement occurs.

This distinction highlights a key contribution of this study. It demonstrates that facilitating conditions operate at a different stage of the behavioural process supporting the transition from intention to decision-making thereby extending the explanatory scope of UTAUT2 in political contexts.

In summary, facilitating conditions are essential to enabling digital political participation, but their influence is indirect and context-dependent. This study provides a more nuanced understanding of how structural and technological factors shape political behaviour in social media environments by distinguishing between their role in behavioural intention and voter choice.

2.9.2.5 Social Media Hedonic Motivation (SMHM)

Hedonic motivation refers to the degree of pleasure, enjoyment, or intrinsic satisfaction derived from using a technology (Venkatesh et al., 2012). Within the

UTAUT2 framework, this construct captures the affective dimension of technology use, distinguishing it from utilitarian factors such as performance expectancy. In social media environments, hedonic motivation is particularly salient, as platforms are designed to maximise user engagement through entertainment, interactivity, and emotional stimulation.

A growing body of research highlights the central role of hedonic motivation in shaping digital engagement, particularly among young users. Dwivedi et al. (2021) argue that interactive and engaging content enhances emotional gratification, thereby increasing users' willingness to participate in online activities. Similarly, Belcastro et al. (2022) demonstrate that the integration of political content into entertaining and relatable formats reduces cognitive barriers and enhances accessibility. These findings suggest that hedonic motivation not only attracts users to platforms but also facilitates engagement with content that might otherwise be perceived as complex or demanding, such as political information.

In the context of political communication, hedonic motivation represents a significant shift in how political engagement is conceptualised. Traditional models emphasise rational decision-making and issue-based evaluation, whereas social media environments increasingly prioritise emotionally engaging and visually appealing content. Political participation is thus reconfigured as an experience that is not only informative but also enjoyable and socially rewarding.

Empirical studies further support this transformation. Kanthawongs and Jabutay (2024) found that positive emotional experiences, such as enjoyment and excitement, significantly increase users' likelihood of engaging in civic activities. Similarly, Sugiono et al. (2025), Lestari et al. (2023), and Widiyanto and Rachmawati (2024) demonstrate that hedonic motivation encourages spontaneous and affect-driven engagement, particularly in environments characterised by short-form, interactive content. This is especially evident in platforms such as TikTok and Instagram, where political messages are often embedded within entertainment-oriented formats, blurring the boundary between civic engagement and leisure.

This phenomenon can be understood through the lens of affective engagement, where emotional resonance becomes a key driver of participation. Unlike traditional political communication, which relies on cognitive processing and deliberation, social media platforms leverage humour, storytelling, music, and visual aesthetics to capture attention and sustain engagement. As a result, political participation becomes more

experiential and less cognitively demanding, aligning with younger audiences' media consumption habits.

However, the role of hedonic motivation is not without limitations. Some scholars caution that while enjoyment can stimulate initial engagement, it may also encourage superficial or passive forms of participation, such as liking, sharing, or commenting without deeper political understanding (Kim et al., 2020; Mardjo, 2020). This raises concerns about the quality of political engagement, particularly in environments where entertainment value may overshadow substantive discourse.

Despite these concerns, the literature consistently demonstrates that hedonic motivation is a powerful predictor of behavioural intention in digital contexts. In political settings, it serves as a catalyst, transforming political content from a perceived obligation into an engaging, personally meaningful experience. This is particularly relevant for young voters, who are more responsive to emotionally engaging and visually dynamic content than traditional forms of political communication.

Within the Malaysian context, this dynamic is especially pronounced, as social media platforms play a central role in shaping youth political engagement. Political actors increasingly adopt entertainment-driven strategies, such as memes, short-form videos, and influencer collaborations, to connect with younger audiences. These approaches reflect an understanding that engagement is driven not only by information, but by experience.

Accordingly, this study conceptualises social media hedonic motivation (SMHM) as the extent to which young voters derive enjoyment and emotional satisfaction from using social media for political purposes. Within the proposed framework, SMHM is hypothesised to influence young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) significantly.

The findings of this study strongly support this relationship, with SMHM emerging as one of the most influential predictors of behavioural intention. This result underscores the critical role of affective and experiential factors in shaping digital political engagement, suggesting that enjoyment and emotional resonance are central to understanding how young voters interact with political content on social media.

In summary, hedonic motivation represents a key mechanism through which social media transforms political participation. By shifting engagement from purely cognitive evaluation to affective experience, SMHM provides a crucial link between

digital media environments and behavioural intention, reinforcing its importance within the integrated model.

2.9.2.6 Social Media Habit (SMH)

Habit, within the UTAUT2 framework, refers to the extent to which individuals perform behaviours automatically as a result of learning and repeated use (Venkatesh et al., 2012). Unlike other constructs that emphasise conscious evaluation, such as performance expectancy or effort expectancy, habit captures automaticity, where behaviour is enacted with minimal cognitive deliberation. This distinction is critical, as habitual behaviour reflects past usage patterns that shape present actions independently of intentional decision-making.

Empirical research consistently identifies habit as a strong predictor of technology use, particularly in contexts characterised by frequent and routine interaction. Jung and Lee (2020), for example, found that habit significantly influences continued use of digital platforms, suggesting that repeated exposure reinforces behavioural patterns over time. In social media environments, where engagement is embedded in daily routines, habit becomes a dominant mechanism shaping user behaviour.

In the context of political communication, the concept of habit extends beyond mere platform usage to encompass habitual exposure to political content. Young voters increasingly encounter political information incidentally through their everyday social media use, rather than through deliberate information-seeking behaviour. This phenomenon aligns with the concept of incidental exposure, in which individuals engage with political content as a byproduct of routine media consumption.

Studies indicate that habitual social media use enhances political awareness and engagement by increasing exposure to political information (Deddy et al., 2023; Dankwah & Mensah, 2021). Similarly, Udanor et al. (2016) highlight the role of social media as an accessible and continuous source of political information, particularly in developing contexts. These findings suggest that habit facilitates a form of passive political learning, in which repeated exposure fosters familiarity with political issues, actors, and narratives.

However, the influence of habit on political behaviour is not straightforward. While habitual use increases exposure, it does not necessarily translate into intentional

political engagement. Ohme (2019) and Zhu et al. (2019) demonstrate that active political participation, such as discussion or expression, requires cognitive and motivational involvement beyond habitual consumption. This distinction highlights a critical limitation of habit: it supports exposure and familiarity, but not necessarily behavioural intention.

Furthermore, habitual engagement may also reinforce selective exposure and algorithmically curated content, leading to echo chambers that shape political perceptions without active deliberation. Hassan et al. (2021) note that even digitally active and educated youth may exhibit varying levels of political engagement, suggesting that habitual use alone is insufficient to explain political participation. Emotional content, as observed by Suhita et al. (2025), may further amplify this effect by reinforcing existing preferences through repeated exposure.

Within the Malaysian context, social media use is deeply embedded in the daily routines of young voters. Platforms are accessed frequently and often unconsciously, making habit a pervasive feature of digital behaviour. However, because this usage is routine, it may not significantly influence behavioural intention, which requires conscious evaluation and motivation.

Accordingly, this study conceptualises social media habit (SMH) as the extent to which young voters use social media automatically and routinely, leading to repeated exposure to political content. Within the proposed framework, SMH is hypothesised to influence both behavioural intention (YVBI) and voter choice.

The findings of this study provide important theoretical clarification. SMH was found to have no significant effect on behavioural intention, but a significant direct effect on voter choice. This suggests that habitual social media use does not drive intentional engagement with political content but instead influences decision-making indirectly through repeated exposure and familiarity. In other words, habit operates at the level of cognitive conditioning rather than conscious intention.

This distinction represents a key contribution of this study. It demonstrates that habit functions as a background mechanism that shapes political preferences through continuous exposure, rather than as a motivational driver of engagement. By separating the effects of habit on intention and choice, this study extends the application of UTAUT2 in political contexts and provides a more nuanced understanding of digital political behaviour.

In summary, while habit is a powerful determinant of technology use, its role in political participation is indirect and exposure-driven. By influencing how frequently and consistently young voters encounter political content, SMH contributes to the formation of voter preferences, even in the absence of deliberate engagement.

2.10 Young Voter Behavioural Intention (YVBI)

Behavioural intention represents a central construct in the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2), referring to an individual's conscious willingness or plan to engage with a technology (Venkatesh et al., 2012). Within technology adoption research, behavioural intention is widely recognised as the most immediate predictor of actual behaviour, serving as a cognitive mechanism through which beliefs, motivations, and social influences translate into action (García et al., 2022; Yu et al., 2021).

In the context of this study, behavioural intention is reconceptualised as young voters' intention to use social media for political participation, encompassing activities such as seeking political information, engaging in discussions, and interacting with political content. This construct is critical because it functions as the link between technology acceptance and political behaviour, bridging two traditionally separate domains of research.

Classical models of voter behaviour, including the sociological (Berelson et al., 1954), socio-psychological (Campbell et al., 1960), and economic paradigms (Downs, 1957), have primarily focused on factors such as social background, party identification, and rational choice. While these models offer strong explanatory power for voting behaviour, they do not account for the role of digital technologies in shaping political engagement. Conversely, UTAUT2 explains technology adoption effectively but does not extend to electoral decision-making. This creates a theoretical gap in which the process linking digital engagement to voting behaviour remains underexplored.

Behavioural intention addresses this gap by acting as a mediating mechanism. It captures how factors such as performance expectancy, social influence, and hedonic motivation shape young voters' willingness to engage with political content on social media, which in turn influences their electoral decision-making. In this sense, behavioural intention is not merely an outcome of technology acceptance but rather a transformational stage in which digital interaction evolves into political engagement.

Empirical research supports the growing importance of social media in shaping behavioural intention among young voters. Studies indicate that social media enhances political literacy by providing accessible and diverse sources of information (Deddy et al., 2023; Yaakub et al., 2023). This increased access enables young voters to develop political awareness and confidence, which are essential precursors to participation. Furthermore, social media platforms facilitate emotional engagement and self-expression, both of which contribute to stronger behavioural intention (Abid & Harrigan, 2020).

Beyond information access, social media fosters interactive and participatory forms of engagement. Ida et al. (2020) demonstrate that digital platforms enable youth to engage in political discourse across diverse contexts, transforming passive audiences into active participants. This aligns with the concept of networked political engagement, in which users are both consumers and producers of political content.

Importantly, behavioural intention among young voters is not static but develops progressively. Poorrezaei et al. (2023) describe this as a journey of engagement, where individuals move from initial exposure to deeper involvement over time. This progression highlights the cumulative effect of repeated exposure to political content, reinforcing social media's role as an environment for continuous engagement.

However, the formation of behavioural intention is also subject to challenges. Social media environments may foster echo chambers and polarisation, limiting exposure to diverse viewpoints and potentially distorting political understanding (Jain & Pandey, 2023). Additionally, the presence of entertainment-driven content may divert attention away from substantive political engagement, creating variability in how behavioural intention translates into actual participation.

Despite these limitations, empirical evidence consistently demonstrates a strong relationship between social media use, political efficacy, and participation. Hassan et al. (2021) found that increased interaction with political content on social media enhances users' confidence in their ability to participate in political processes, thereby strengthening behavioural intention. This suggests that social media not only informs but also empowers young voters to act.

Within the Malaysian context, young voters are highly digitally literate and rely extensively on social media as a primary source of political information. This reliance reinforces the importance of behavioural intention as a key determinant of political behaviour in digital environments. However, not all social media use leads to political

engagement, as some users prioritise entertainment-oriented content. This highlights the need to examine the conditions under which behavioural intention is activated and translated into meaningful participation.

Accordingly, this study conceptualises young voter behavioural intention (YVBI) as the extent to which young voters intend to use social media for political participation. Within the proposed framework, YVBI functions as a mediating variable linking social media acceptance factors (UTAUT2 constructs) to voter choice.

The findings of this study confirm the central role of YVBI, demonstrating a significant positive effect on voter choice. This result validates the theoretical position that behavioural intention serves as a critical bridge between digital engagement and electoral decision-making.

In summary, behavioural intention represents a pivotal construct that integrates technology acceptance and voter behaviour theories. By positioning YVBI as a mediating mechanism, this study advances the understanding of how social media influences political participation, providing a more comprehensive explanation of young voters' behaviour in contemporary digital environments.

2.10.1 Primary Voters' Choice Theory

The study of voter behaviour has long attracted scholarly attention, leading to the development of multiple theoretical paradigms to explain how individuals make electoral decisions. Since the 1940s, research in this area has evolved through three dominant perspectives: the sociological paradigm, which emphasises the role of social structures and group affiliations (Berelson et al., 1954; Lazarsfeld et al., 1968); the socio-psychological paradigm, which focuses on party identification and attitudinal alignment (Campbell et al., 1960; Converse, 1964); and the economic paradigm, which conceptualises voters as rational actors making cost-benefit decisions (Downs, 1957; Popkin, 1991).

While these paradigms provide valuable insights, they tend to emphasise single-dimensional explanations of voting behaviour. In contrast, Newman and Sheth (1985) introduced the Voter Choice Behaviour Model, which offers a more comprehensive and integrative framework for understanding electoral decision-making. The model builds upon Sheth's (1975) general theory of individual choice behaviour and extends it into the political domain by incorporating multiple cognitive and affective determinants.

The Newman and Sheth model is particularly significant because it conceptualises voter behaviour as a multidimensional decision-making process, rather than a purely rational or socially determined outcome. It identifies seven distinct cognitive domains that collectively influence voter choice, such as issues and policies, social imagery, emotional feelings, candidate image, current events, personal events, and epistemic issues. These domains reflect both rational evaluations (e.g., policy positions, current events) and affective influences (e.g., emotions, candidate perceptions), thereby capturing the complexity of real-world voting behaviour. The model's predictive strength is demonstrated by its empirical validation, with approximately 90% accuracy in forecasting voter behaviour (Newman & Sheth, 1985).

Subsequent research has reinforced the relevance of this model in contemporary electoral contexts. Voter decisions are increasingly understood as the result of an interplay between emotional responses and strategic considerations, such as perceptions of party viability and electoral outcomes. This aligns with the concept of strategic voting, where individuals may adjust their preferences based on anticipated political outcomes rather than purely ideological alignment.

The role of media and political communication further strengthens the model's applicability. Ramli et al. (2020) demonstrate that candidate visibility and digital campaign strategies significantly influence voter awareness and decision-making, while Magni and Reynolds (2023) highlight the importance of candidate identity in shaping voter support. In digital environments, media framing and online narratives play a critical role in activating the cognitive domains identified by Newman and Sheth, particularly emotional feelings, social imagery, and candidate image.

Empirical evidence from the Malaysian context supports these dynamics. Musa et al. (2020) found that media exposure influences voter behaviour across key domains, including issues and policies, current events, and social imagery. This indicates that voter choice is increasingly shaped by mediated political experiences, particularly in environments where digital platforms dominate information dissemination.

In addition to media influences, voter behaviour is shaped by socioeconomic and institutional factors. Wangina (2022) demonstrates that demographic characteristics such as income and education significantly affect voting preferences, while Thornburg (2023) highlights how electoral systems, such as semi-closed primaries, introduce strategic complexity into voter decision-making. These findings underscore the

multifaceted nature of voter behaviour, which extends beyond individual cognition to include structural and contextual influences.

Furthermore, political efficacy plays a crucial role in shaping voter participation. Hassan et al. (2021) show that social media engagement enhances individuals' belief in their ability to influence political outcomes, thereby strengthening their likelihood of participating in elections. This highlights an important intersection between digital engagement and voter choice, particularly among young voters.

Despite criticisms and modifications, the Newman and Sheth model remains highly relevant in both traditional and contemporary democracies. Its strength lies in its ability to integrate diverse determinants of voting behaviour into a single coherent framework, offering both theoretical depth and practical applicability across different electoral contexts.

Accordingly, this study adopted the Newman and Sheth (1985) Voter Choice Behaviour Model as the theoretical foundation for explaining voter choice. The model provides a structured approach to operationalising the dependent variable through its seven cognitive domains, enabling a comprehensive assessment of how young voters evaluate political options.

More importantly, adopting this model addresses a critical limitation in technology acceptance research. While UTAUT2 effectively explains behavioural intention, it does not account for the decision-making processes underlying electoral choice. By integrating Newman and Sheth's framework, this study bridges this gap, linking digital engagement with the cognitive and affective mechanisms that ultimately shape voting behaviour.

In conclusion, the Newman and Sheth model offers a robust and multidimensional framework for understanding voter behaviour. Its integration within this study enables a more comprehensive explanation of how social media acceptance influences not only behavioural intention but also the final electoral decisions of young voters in contemporary digital environments. Figure 2.3 illustrates the choice behaviour model with its seven cognitive domains.

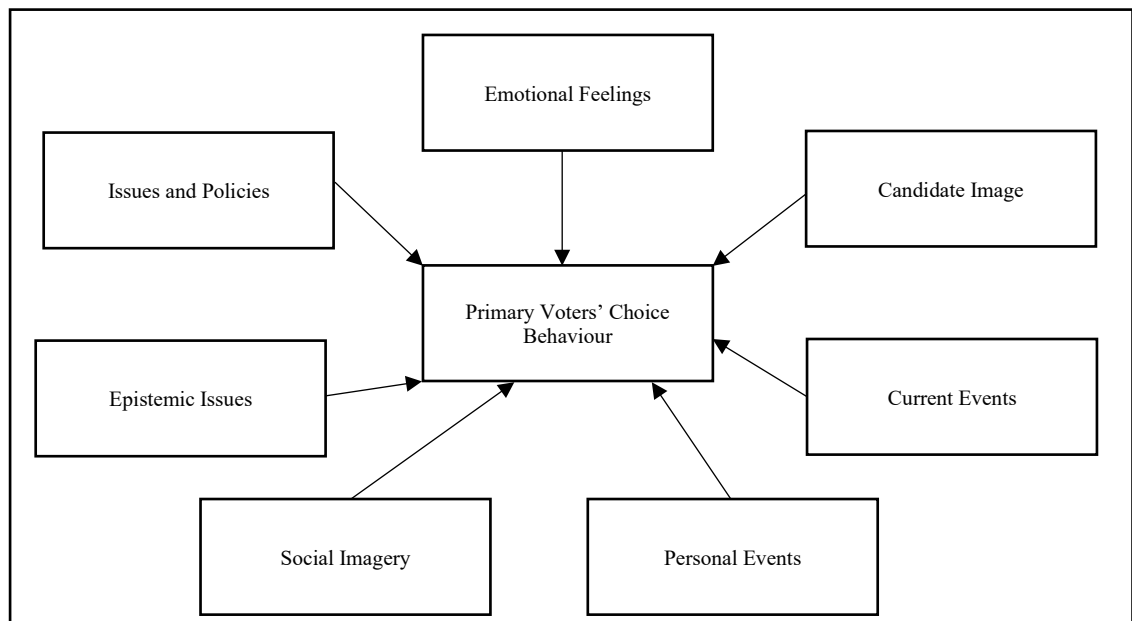


Figure 2.3 Model of Voter's Choice Behaviour (Newman and Sheth, 1985)

2.10.1.1 Voting Issues and Policies (VIP)

Within the Newman and Sheth (1985) Voter Choice Behaviour Model, voting issues and policies (VIP) represent one of the core cognitive domains influencing electoral decision-making. This construct refers to voters' evaluation of candidates based on their positions and strategies across key policy areas, including economic management, social issues, governance, and international relations. It reflects the rational and programmatic dimension of voter choice, in which individuals assess how closely a candidate's policies align with their personal interests and societal expectations.

Theoretically, this domain is grounded in the assumption that voters behave as issue-oriented decision-makers, selecting candidates whose policy platforms offer the greatest perceived benefits. As noted by Newman and Sheth (1985), this evaluation involves assessing the incentives embedded in political programmes and determining which candidate is best positioned to address pressing societal concerns. In this sense, VIP represents the instrumental logic of voting behaviour, where electoral decisions are guided by policy relevance and perceived effectiveness.

Empirical evidence supports the continued relevance of this domain, particularly among younger voters. Studies in the Malaysian context indicate that youth prioritise issues such as ethical governance, transparency, cost of living, and social justice when

evaluating political candidates. This reflects a growing expectation for political actors to demonstrate both policy competence and value alignment, reinforcing the importance of issues and policies in shaping voter preferences.

However, contemporary research suggests that voter decision-making is not purely policy-driven. Identity and psychological factors often interact with policy evaluations, influencing how issues are interpreted and prioritised. For instance, identity-based considerations may override policy alignment when group affiliations or ideological attachments become salient. This highlights the need to understand VIP not as an isolated determinant but as part of a broader cognitive and affective decision-making system.

The role of media and digital platforms further complicates this process. Social media has become a central channel through which voters encounter, interpret, and evaluate political issues. Exposure to political content on these platforms enhances political knowledge and awareness, particularly among young voters. Research indicates that individuals who rely on social media for political information demonstrate higher levels of issue familiarity and engagement, suggesting that digital environments play a critical role in activating the VIP domain.

In addition, the framing of issues significantly influences voter perceptions. Political messages that emphasise specific aspects of policy, such as economic impact, social justice, or national identity, can shape how voters evaluate candidates. This aligns with framing theory, which posits that the presentation of information influences interpretation and decision-making. Strategic framing in digital campaigns can therefore enhance the salience of certain issues, thereby guiding voter preferences.

Structural and institutional factors also shape the influence of issues and policies. Accessibility to voting infrastructure, legal frameworks such as voter identification laws, and broader socioeconomic conditions affect how voters engage with political issues and translate their preferences into action. These factors highlight that VIP operates in a context that either facilitates or constrains political participation.

Furthermore, voters respond not only to policy content but also to perceived economic implications and governance outcomes. Evaluations of fiscal policy, cost of living, and economic stability play a significant role in shaping electoral decisions, particularly when voters perceive a direct personal impact. This reinforces the importance of transparent and credible policy communication in influencing voter behaviour.

Within the context of this study, VIP is particularly relevant as social media platforms increasingly serve as primary sources of political information for young voters. These platforms amplify issue visibility, facilitate discussion, and enable the rapid dissemination of policy narratives. Consequently, the evaluation of issues and policies is no longer confined to traditional media but is actively shaped within digital communication environments.

Accordingly, this study conceptualised voting issues and policies (VIP) as the extent to which young voters evaluate political candidates based on their policy positions and the relevance of issues to them. As one of the seven domains of the Newman and Sheth model, VIP contributes to the operationalisation of voter choice as a multidimensional construct.

In summary, while issues and policies remain a fundamental determinant of voter behaviour, their influence is mediated by identity, media exposure, and contextual factors. In contemporary digital environments, the VIP domain is increasingly shaped by how political issues are communicated, framed, and experienced through social media, making it a critical component in understanding young voters' electoral decisions.

2.10.1.2 Voting Emotional Feelings (VEF)

Within the Newman and Sheth (1985) Voter Choice Behaviour Model, voting emotional feelings (VEF) represent the affective dimension of voter decision-making. This construct captures the range of emotional responses—such as trust, fear, enthusiasm, or dissatisfaction—that individuals experience toward political candidates, issues, or parties. Unlike the rational evaluation of policies, VEF reflects how emotional arousal and affective attachment influence electoral choices.

Theoretically, VEF is grounded in the recognition that voting behaviour is not purely cognitive but is significantly shaped by affective processing. Newman and Sheth (1985) conceptualise emotional feelings as part of a broader psychological profile that influences how voters interpret political information and form preferences. Emotional responses can function both as immediate reactions to political stimuli and as heuristics that simplify complex decision-making processes.

Empirical research consistently demonstrates the importance of emotional dynamics in electoral contexts. Studies on political campaigning show that emotional

appeals, particularly in negative or contrast messaging, generate varied voter responses depending on whether the message targets candidates or issues (Mattes & Redlawsk, 2014; Russo, 2016). This suggests that emotional reactions are context-dependent and can significantly shape how political messages are received and evaluated.

Importantly, emotions are not merely reactive but are also strategically mobilised in political communication. Soontjens (2021) highlights that political actors who understand voters' emotional dispositions can design more effective campaign strategies by aligning messages with voters' affective expectations. This aligns with broader political communication theories, where emotional framing enhances message salience and persuasive impact.

In digital environments, the role of emotional engagement becomes even more pronounced. Social media platforms facilitate the rapid dissemination of emotionally charged content, intensifying voters' affective responses. Koay et al. (2023) demonstrate that digital media strengthens emotional bonds between voters and political candidates, increasing engagement while simultaneously raising the risk of polarisation due to exposure to emotionally biased or misleading information. This reflects the dual nature of emotional engagement in contemporary political communication.

Emotions also interact with cognitive determinants of voting behaviour. Segovia and Gamboa (2020) argue that emotional sentiments can amplify or attenuate the effects of factors such as party identification and policy alignment. In contexts like Malaysia, where political affiliations may intersect with identity and social factors, emotions play a critical role in reinforcing or reshaping voter preferences.

Furthermore, emotional engagement has been shown to enhance political participation among young voters. Wenxuan and Osman (2023) found that emotional satisfaction derived from political involvement increases motivation to participate in elections. Similarly, Maingi (2025) reports a positive relationship between voter emotions and voting behaviour, indicating that affective responses can serve as significant predictors of electoral decisions.

The relationship between emotional responses and trust in electoral processes also highlights the broader influence of affect in political behaviour. Yin et al. (2020) demonstrate that emotional reassurance and perceived comfort influence individuals' willingness to adopt technological voting systems, suggesting that emotional factors extend beyond candidate evaluation to shape broader participation behaviours.

In the context of this study, emotions are particularly relevant given the prominence of social media in shaping political engagement among young voters. Digital platforms amplify emotional narratives, making affective responses more immediate and influential in shaping perceptions of candidates and issues. As a result, VEF plays a critical role in translating exposure to political content into evaluative judgments.

Accordingly, this study conceptualises voting emotional feelings (VEF) as the extent to which young voters' emotional responses toward political candidates, issues, and campaigns influence their electoral decisions. As one of the seven domains in the Newman and Sheth model, VEF contributes to the multidimensional operationalisation of voter choice.

In summary, emotions are a central component of voter behaviour, shaping how individuals interpret political information and form preferences. In contemporary digital environments, where emotional content is highly salient, VEF becomes an increasingly powerful determinant of electoral decision-making, particularly among young voters.

2.10.1.3 Voting Candidate image (VCI)

Within the Newman and Sheth (1985) Voter Choice Behaviour Model, voting candidate image (VCI) represents a central cognitive domain that captures voters' overall perceptions of a political candidate. This construct reflects how individuals evaluate candidates based on attributes such as personality, credibility, leadership qualities, integrity, communicated values, and party affiliation. Unlike issue-based evaluation (VIP), which focuses on policy positions, VCI emphasises the symbolic and representational aspects of candidates, functioning as a heuristic through which voters simplify complex political choices.

Theoretically, candidate image operates as a cognitive shortcut, enabling voters to make decisions in environments characterised by information overload and limited time for deliberation. Newman and Sheth (1985) argue that voters often rely on candidate image to infer competence, trustworthiness, and alignment with personal values. This aligns with broader political communication theories, particularly candidate-centred politics and the personalisation of politics, in which electoral decisions increasingly revolve around individual candidates rather than parties or policies.

Candidate image is inherently multidimensional, encompassing both cognitive evaluations and affective responses. Al-Thani et al. (2022) highlight that candidates who effectively communicate policy relevance and align with public interests strengthen their perceived image, reinforcing the interdependence between policy positioning and personal representation.

Empirical evidence underscores the significance of candidate image, particularly among young and first-time voters. In the Malaysian context, Saputra et al. (2023) demonstrate a strong relationship between candidate image and voting intention, with public portrayal and perceived personal attributes emerging as key determinants. Similarly, Syeikh et al. (2023) found that voters prioritise candidate personality when making electoral decisions, suggesting that personal characteristics often outweigh policy considerations in shaping voter preferences.

Clarity of candidate positioning also plays a critical role in decision-making. Holman and Lay (2020) argue that when voters are unable to identify a candidate's ideological stance clearly, uncertainty increases, leading to difficulties in decision-making and potentially lower electoral participation. A well-defined candidate image, therefore, functions as a cognitive anchor, reducing ambiguity and facilitating more confident electoral choices.

Beyond cognitive evaluation, the candidate's image is deeply intertwined with emotional and identity-based factors. Harrison et al. (2022) demonstrate that voters are more likely to support candidates whose perceived values align with their own life aspirations and social identities. This alignment fosters emotional attachment and reinforces political support, highlighting the interaction between VCI and affective domains such as emotional feelings (VEF).

In contemporary political environments, the construction of a candidate's image is increasingly mediated by digital platforms. Social media plays a pivotal role in shaping, amplifying, and sometimes distorting perceptions of candidates. Through curated content, personal branding, and direct engagement with audiences, candidates are able to craft personalised political identities that resonate with specific voter segments. However, this also introduces risks, as digitally mediated images may prioritise visibility and relatability over substantive political competence.

Within the Malaysian political landscape, where cultural expectations, identity politics, and media narratives intersect, candidate image becomes particularly influential. Voters often evaluate candidates not only based on their policy positions but

also on their perceived authenticity, leadership style, and alignment with societal values. This reinforces the relevance of VCI as a key determinant of electoral choice.

Accordingly, this study conceptualises voting candidate image (VCI) as the extent to which young voters evaluate political candidates based on perceived personal attributes, credibility, and alignment with their values. As one of the seven domains within the Newman and Sheth model, VCI contributes to the multidimensional operationalisation of voter choice.

In summary, the candidate image is a critical mechanism by which voters interpret and evaluate political actors. In digitally mediated environments, where personal branding and visual communication are highly salient, VCI becomes an increasingly dominant factor in shaping electoral decisions, particularly among young voters.

2.10.1.4 Voting Current Events (VCE)

The model of primary voters' choice behaviour developed by Newman and Sheth (1985) provides a foundational framework for analysing how current events shape electoral preferences. In Malaysia, political, social, and economic events continuously influence voter sentiment, aligning with the model's emphasis on external stimuli in decision-making processes.

Within the Newman and Sheth (1985) Voter Choice Behaviour Model, voting current events (VCE) refers to the influence of recent political, economic, and social developments on voter decision-making. This construct captures how time-sensitive external events, such as crises, policy changes, or major political transitions, shape voters' evaluations of candidates and ultimately influence electoral choices. Unlike voting issues and policies (VIP), which represent relatively stable policy orientations, VCE reflects the dynamic, situational context in which voting decisions are formed.

Theoretically, VCE is grounded in the premise that voter behaviour is responsive to environmental stimuli. Newman and Sheth (1985) posit that current events activate both cognitive and emotional evaluations, thereby altering voter preferences in real time. This perspective aligns with political communication theories such as agenda-setting and priming, where the salience of current developments influences how voters assess political actors, issues, and performance.

Empirical research supports the significant role of current events in shaping electoral behaviour. Ropik and Qibtiyah (2021) demonstrate that pressing national issues can redirect voter allegiance, particularly among younger voters who are more responsive to emerging developments. Similarly, large-scale crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic have been shown to reshape voter priorities by shifting attention toward governance effectiveness, economic stability, and leadership capability. Miller et al. (2022) highlight how economic disruptions during the pandemic altered public evaluations of political leadership, reinforcing the importance of situational factors in electoral decision-making.

In the Malaysian context, current events have played a critical role in shaping voter behaviour. The COVID-19 pandemic intensified scrutiny of institutional performance, influencing public perceptions of governance and crisis management. In addition, legislative developments such as the implementation of *Undi18* significantly transformed the electoral landscape by expanding youth participation. This institutional shift not only increased voter inclusion but also heightened political awareness and engagement among young voters, reinforcing the importance of contextual changes in shaping electoral behaviour.

Beyond crises and policy changes, political communication processes amplify the influence of current events. Koay and Khairiah (2022) highlight how political marketing shapes public interpretation of ongoing developments, while Wenxuan and Osman (2023) demonstrate that social media platforms enable real-time framing of political narratives. During the 15th General Election (GE15), digital platforms facilitated the rapid dissemination of information, allowing political actors to construct and contest narratives around emerging events almost instantaneously. This media-driven environment magnifies the salience of current events and accelerates their influence on voter decision-making.

Societal disruptions further illustrate the impact of VCE. Abdullah et al. (2022) show that natural disasters, such as the 2022 floods in Malaysia, prompt voters to evaluate government responsiveness and crisis management capacity. These evaluations often translate directly into electoral judgments, demonstrating how real-world events influence both cognitive assessments and emotional responses toward political actors.

Current events also shape political efficacy, which plays a crucial role in electoral participation. Garmann (2020) argues that periods of heightened political

awareness, such as leadership transitions or national crises, strengthen individuals' perceptions of their ability to influence political outcomes. In Malaysia, such conditions have been associated with increased political engagement, particularly among young voters.

In the context of this study, VCE is particularly significant given the pervasive role of social media in disseminating and framing political information. Digital platforms not only increase exposure to current events but also shape their interpretation through framing, emotional amplification, and selective visibility. As a result, young voters are continuously exposed to evolving political narratives that influence their perceptions of candidates and issues.

Accordingly, this study conceptualises voting current events (VCE) as the extent to which recent political, economic, and social developments influence young voters' evaluations of candidates and electoral decisions. As one of the seven domains within the Newman and Sheth model, VCE contributes to the multidimensional operationalisation of voter choice.

In summary, current events represent a dynamic and situational determinant of voter behaviour. In contemporary digital environments, where information circulates rapidly and continuously, VCE becomes a powerful factor shaping electoral decisions, particularly among young voters who are highly responsive to real-time political developments.

2.10.1.5 Voting Personal Events (VPE)

Personal events are factors in a politician's personal life that could lead a voter to reconsider their decision and support an alternative candidate (Newman & Sheth, 1985). Newman and Sheth (1985) applied a model of consumer choice behaviour developed by Sheth (1975) to research the behaviour of voters in the 1980 Illinois Presidential Primary. Within the Newman and Sheth (1985) Voter Choice Behaviour Model, voting personal events (VPE) refer to the influence of individual-level experiences and personal life circumstances on voter decision-making. This construct captures how voters' own lived experiences, such as economic conditions, life transitions, and direct encounters with governance, shape their perceptions of political candidates and ultimately influence electoral choices.

Theoretically, VPE is grounded in the idea that voter behaviour is not solely driven by external information or abstract policy evaluation, but also by personal relevance and experiential interpretation. Newman and Sheth (1985), drawing from Sheth's (1975) consumer choice framework, argue that individuals evaluate options based on their personal needs and situational contexts. In this sense, voting behaviour parallels consumer decision-making, where personal experiences influence perceived value and choice.

Unlike voting candidate image (VCI), which focuses on perceptions of the candidate, or voting current events (VCE), which reflects external situational developments, VPE emphasises the voter's own experiences as the basis for evaluation. These experiences function as interpretive filters through which political information is processed and judged.

Empirical evidence highlights the significance of personal experiences in shaping political behaviour. Voters often assess candidates based on how policies and governance outcomes affect their daily lives. Soontjens (2021) explains that perceptions of accountability are formed through direct or indirect experiences with government performance, reinforcing the role of personal encounters in shaping political evaluations. When political decisions intersect with individual needs—such as cost of living, employment, or access to services—voters are more likely to develop strong preferences toward candidates.

In addition, individual beliefs and prior experiences contribute to the formation of trust and credibility judgments. Dash (2024) emphasises that trust in political actors is often rooted in personal experiences, which shape attitudes toward candidates beyond formal policy considerations. Similarly, Järvi et al. (2021) identify the use of heuristics based on personal or anecdotal information as a key factor in voter decision-making. These heuristics enable voters to simplify complex political information by relying on familiar or personally relevant cues.

In the Malaysian context, the influence of personal events is particularly salient due to diverse socio-economic and cultural conditions. Voters' lived experiences, such as economic pressures, community-level issues, and access to public services, play a crucial role in shaping electoral preferences. In local and constituency-level elections, familiarity with candidates and personal interactions often exerts a stronger influence than broader policy discourse, highlighting the importance of experiential factors in voter behaviour.

Social media further amplifies the role of personal experiences in political evaluation. Digital platforms enable voters to collectively share, interpret, and validate personal experiences, transforming individual perceptions into shared narratives. Zulli and Towner (2021) demonstrate that emotionally resonant and authentic content fosters stronger connections between voters and candidates. In Malaysia, candidates increasingly utilise platforms such as Instagram and TikTok to present relatable and personalised content, reinforcing their alignment with voters' everyday experiences.

It is important to distinguish VPE from event-based influences related to candidates themselves. While candidate-specific incidents such as debates or scandals are better captured under voter current events (VCE) or voter candidate image (VCI), VPE specifically refers to how voters' own life experiences shape their interpretation of political actors and issues.

Accordingly, this study conceptualised voting personal events (VPE) as the degree to which young voters' personal experiences and life circumstances influence their evaluations of political candidates and their electoral decisions. As one of the seven domains within the Newman and Sheth model, VPE contributes to the multidimensional operationalisation of voter choice.

In summary, personal events constitute an experiential dimension of voter behaviour, in which individual life circumstances shape political perceptions and preferences. In contemporary digital environments, where personal experiences are increasingly shared and amplified through social media, VPE becomes a significant factor in understanding how young voters form electoral decisions.

2.10.1.6 Voting Social Imagery (VSI)

Social imagery is assessed using a profile comprising images representing one or more distinct group categories (Newman & Sheth, 1985). In essence, a candidate's likelihood of receiving votes can be attributed to their perceived association with specific societal groupings. Social imagery plays a pivotal role in shaping voter choices, particularly within digitally mediated electoral environments. Within the Newman and Sheth (1985) Voter Choice Behaviour Model, voting social imagery (VSI) refers to the influence of social group associations and symbolic representations on voter decision-making. This construct captures how voters evaluate candidates based on their

perceived alignment with particular social categories, identities, and societal expectations.

Social imagery is conceptualised through a profile of symbolic representations that reflect one or more distinct social groupings (Newman & Sheth, 1985). These groupings may include age, gender, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, and ideological orientation. Voters often rely on these symbolic cues to infer whether a candidate represents their identity, values, or aspirations. As such, VSI operates as a social identification mechanism in which electoral choices are influenced by perceived group congruence rather than by purely rational policy evaluation.

Unlike voting candidate image (VCI), which focuses on individual attributes such as competence or personality, and voting personal events (VPE), which emphasises personal experiences, VSI is rooted in collective identity and social belonging. It reflects how candidates are positioned within broader social structures and how voters interpret these associations in relation to their own identities.

Empirical research demonstrates that social imagery plays a significant role in shaping voting intention, particularly within digitally mediated environments. Bukari et al. (2023), using structural equation modelling, found that symbolic representations and candidate personality significantly influence voting intention when amplified through social media platforms. Their findings suggest that in emerging democracies, digital visibility enhances the salience of social imagery, making it a critical determinant of electoral behaviour.

The influence of VSI is especially pronounced among young voters, who are highly engaged with social media and more exposed to diverse representations of political actors. Hernandez (2019) notes that young voters actively use social media to gather political information, express political preferences, and influence peer participation. Similarly, Karamychev and Swank (2022) highlight that social media serves as a participatory space where young individuals construct and negotiate political identities.

Digital platforms significantly reshape how social imagery is constructed and disseminated. Koay et al. (2023) demonstrate that candidates increasingly utilise social media to curate relatable and visually compelling representations of themselves, thereby enhancing engagement among digital-native voters. In Malaysia, political actors strategically employ personal branding techniques to align their public image with socially desirable identities, amplifying their appeal across different voter segments.

The concept of electability further reinforces the importance of social imagery. Minozzi and Woon (2023) argue that voters assess candidates not only based on policy positions but also on perceived social desirability, charisma, and group alignment. These perceptions are closely tied to how candidates are socially represented and positioned within the electorate.

Cultural and societal norms also shape the interpretation of social imagery. Belschner et al. (2024) highlight that voter evaluations are influenced by gender expectations and broader social norms, which affect how candidates are perceived and accepted. In the Malaysian context, these dynamics are particularly salient, as candidates who align with dominant cultural narratives, whether traditional or progressive, are more likely to resonate with specific voter groups.

Furthermore, Alivi (2023) emphasises that voters are drawn to candidates whose social imagery reflects their lived experiences and identities. This alignment fosters emotional connections and strengthens voter motivation, demonstrating that VSI operates at the intersection of symbolic representation and affective engagement.

The Malaysian political landscape provides clear illustrations of the role of social imagery. Political lineage and familial associations, such as candidates from established political families, serve as powerful symbolic cues that influence voter perception. These associations contribute to perceived legitimacy, continuity, and social familiarity, thereby shaping electoral preferences. In elections such as GE14 and GE15, candidates with strong social imagery rooted in legacy and identity have demonstrated significant electoral advantages.

In summary, voting social imagery represents a critical dimension of voter behaviour, in which symbolic associations and group identities shape electoral decisions. In contemporary digital environments, social media amplifies and accelerates the construction of these images, making VSI a key mechanism for the communication and internalisation of political meaning among young voters.

2.10.1.7 Voting Epistemic Issues (VEI)

The model of primary voters' choice behaviour developed by Newman and Sheth (1985) offers a robust framework for analysing how current events shape electoral preferences. In Malaysia, political, social, and economic developments significantly influence voter sentiment and engagement, reflecting the model's emphasis on external

stimuli in shaping decisions. Epistemic issues significantly influence voting attitudes (Sardju et al., 2020). Epistemic issues discuss the candidate's potential motivations for taking pride in their curiosity, competence, and exploratory aspirations as a means of seeking novelty and change.

Within the Newman and Sheth (1985) Voter Choice Behaviour Model, voting epistemic issues (VEI) refer to the influence of knowledge-seeking, information evaluation, and cognitive curiosity on voter decision-making. This construct captures how voters engage with political information, assess policy content, and make informed electoral choices, driven by their desire to understand and evaluate.

Epistemic issues are grounded in the concept of epistemic motivation, which reflects an individual's inclination to seek knowledge, reduce uncertainty, and make decisions based on reasoned judgment. In the context of voting behaviour, this involves evaluating political manifestos, policy proposals, and ideological positions. Newman and Sheth (1985) conceptualise this domain as a cognitive driver of voter choice, where decisions are influenced by the pursuit of information and the desire for meaningful understanding.

Unlike voting current events (VCE), which focuses on external developments, or voting emotional feelings (VEF), which emphasises affective responses, VEI is rooted in cognitive processing and rational evaluation. It reflects how voters actively seek, interpret, and utilise information to form political judgments.

Empirical research supports the role of epistemic factors in shaping voting behaviour. Sardju et al. (2020) demonstrate that epistemic considerations significantly influence voting attitudes, particularly among individuals who prioritise knowledge acquisition and critical evaluation. These voters are more likely to engage with political content in a deliberate, analytical manner rather than relying solely on emotional or heuristic cues.

In contemporary political environments, epistemic engagement is closely linked to the evaluation of party manifestos and policy platforms. Giavazzi (2022) highlights that democratic participation entails an epistemic responsibility, in which voters are expected to acquire sufficient knowledge of political alternatives to make informed decisions. This includes assessing policy proposals across key domains, including economic management, social welfare, education, healthcare, and environmental sustainability.

The Malaysian context provides a relevant illustration of epistemic voting behaviour. During the 15th General Election (GE15), major political coalitions, including Barisan Nasional (BN), Pakatan Harapan (PH), and Perikatan Nasional (PN), presented comprehensive manifestos outlining their policy priorities. These manifestos addressed critical national concerns such as cost of living, food security, climate change, economic recovery, and social development. As noted by Moten (2023) and Bedi (2022), these policy platforms played a significant role in shaping voter evaluation by offering structured information for comparison and judgment.

Digital media further transforms epistemic engagement by expanding access to political information. Social media platforms enable voters to encounter diverse viewpoints, analyse competing narratives, and participate in information exchange. However, this environment also introduces challenges, including information overload and misinformation. As a result, epistemic engagement in the digital age requires not only access to information but also the ability to evaluate its credibility and relevance critically.

Koay and Khairiah (2022) emphasise that political communication strategies increasingly target voters' cognitive processing by framing issues in ways that facilitate understanding and persuasion. Similarly, Wenxuan and Osman (2023) demonstrate that digital platforms during GE15 enabled the rapid dissemination of policy-related information, allowing voters to engage with political content in real time.

Epistemic issues also intersect with political efficacy. Garmann (2020) suggests that individuals who feel informed and knowledgeable are more likely to perceive themselves as capable of influencing political outcomes. This sense of efficacy strengthens participation and reinforces the role of informed decision-making in democratic processes.

Importantly, epistemic voting does not require exhaustive knowledge but rather a sufficient level of informed judgment. Voters often rely on cognitive shortcuts such as ideology, party identification, endorsements, and credible sources to navigate complex political information. These mechanisms allow individuals to balance information processing with practical decision-making constraints.

Accordingly, this study conceptualises voting epistemic issues (VEI) as the extent to which young voters engage in knowledge-seeking, information evaluation, and cognitive assessment when forming electoral decisions. As one of the seven domains in

Newman and Sheth's model, VEI helps explain how rational and informational considerations shape voter choice.

In summary, epistemic issues constitute the cognitive dimension of voter behaviour, in which the pursuit of knowledge drives decisions, the evaluation of policy content, and critical engagement with political information. In digitally mediated environments, where information is abundant yet uneven in quality, epistemic engagement becomes increasingly important in shaping informed and responsible electoral participation.

2.11 Hypotheses Development

In order to provide empirical answers to the research questions, a series of hypotheses were formulated. These hypotheses are grounded in the theoretical integration of the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) and Newman & Sheth's Model of Primary Voter Behaviour. They are designed to test the relationships among social media acceptance, behavioural intention, and voter choice. Each hypothesis corresponds directly to one or more research questions, thereby ensuring alignment between the research's objectives, questions, and analytical framework. The hypotheses are grouped thematically according to Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) constructs, behavioural intention, mediating and moderating effects, Newman & Sheth's Model of Primary Voter Behaviour and the overall integrated model. Figure 2.4 illustrates the conceptual framework for voters' choice.

- H1 : Social media performance expectancy (SMPE) has a significant positive effect towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI).
- H2 : Social media effort expectancy (SMEE) has a significant positive effect towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI).
- H3 : Social media social influence (SMSI) has a significant positive effect towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI)
- H4 : Social media facilitating conditions (SMFC) have a significant positive effect towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI).
- H5 : Social media hedonic motivation (SMHM) has a significant positive effect towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI).

- H6 : Social media habit (SMH) has a significant positive effect towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI).
- H7 : Social media facilitating conditions (SMFC) have a significant positive effect towards voters' choice.
- H8 : Social media habit (SMH) has a significant positive effect towards voters' choice.
- H9 : Young Voters' Behavioural Intention (YVBI) has significant effects towards voters' choice.
- H10: Young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) mediates the relationship between social media performance expectancy (SMPE) and voters' choice.
- H11: Young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) mediates the relationship between social media effort expectancy (SMEE) and voters' choice.
- H12: Young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) mediates the relationship between social media social influence (SMSI) and voters' choice.
- H13: Young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) mediates the relationship between social media facilitating conditions (SMFC) and voters' choice.
- H14: Young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) mediates the relationship between social media hedonic motivation (SMHM) and voters' choice.
- H15: Young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) mediates the relationship between social media habit (SMH) and voters' choice.
- H16: Experience will moderate the effect of social media facilitating conditions (SMFC) towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI).
- H17: Experience will moderate the effect of social media hedonic motivation (SMHM) towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI).
- H18: Experience will moderate the effect of social media habit (SMH) towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI).
- H19: Experience will moderate the effect of social media habit (SMH) on voters' choice.
- H20: Experience will moderate the effect of young voters' behavioural intention (YVB) on voters' choice.
- H21: The integrated Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) and Newman & Sheth's Model of Primary Voter Behaviour model demonstrates explanatory and predictive power for voter choice

The hypotheses developed in this study were derived from the integration of the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) and Newman and Sheth's Model of Primary Voter Behaviour. The hypotheses were formulated to examine the direct, mediating, moderating, and predictive relationships between social media acceptance constructs, young voters' behavioural intention, and voters' choice within the context of digital political participation.

The UTAUT2 constructs, namely performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, facilitating conditions, hedonic motivation, and habit, were employed to explain young voters' behavioural intention towards using social media for political participation. Meanwhile, Newman and Sheth's Model of Primary Voter Behaviour provided the theoretical basis for understanding how behavioural intention and voter evaluation dimensions influence voters' choice. In addition, experience was incorporated as a moderating variable to examine whether differences in social media familiarity strengthen or weaken the proposed relationships.

Accordingly, Table 2.1 summarises the hypotheses developed for this study and illustrates their relationship to the conceptual framework.

Table 2.1
Summary Table of Hypotheses Linked to Conceptual Framework

	Hypothesis Relationship	Construct Category	Theoretical Basis	Expected Direction
H1	Social Media Performance Expectancy (SMPE) → Young Voters' Behavioural Intention (YVBI)	Direct Effect	UTAUT2	Positive
H2	Social Media Effort Expectancy (SMEE) → Young Voters' Behavioural Intention (YVBI)	Direct Effect	UTAUT2	Positive
H3	Social Media Social Influence (SMSI) → Young Voters' Behavioural Intention (YVBI)	Direct Effect	UTAUT2	Positive
H4	Social Media Facilitating Conditions (SMFC) → Young Voters' Behavioural Intention (YVBI)	Direct Effect	UTAUT2	Positive
H5	Social Media Hedonic Motivation (SMHM) → Young Voters' Behavioural Intention (YVBI)	Direct Effect	UTAUT2	Positive

Hypothesis Relationship		Construct Category	Theoretical Basis	Expected Direction
H6	Social Media Habit (SMH) → Young Voters' Behavioural Intention (YVBI)	Direct Effect	UTAUT2	Positive
H7	Social Media Facilitating Conditions (SMFC) → Voters' Choice (VC)	Direct Effect	UTAUT2 + Newman & Sheth Model	Positive
H8	Social Media Habit (SMH) → Voters' Choice (VC)	Direct Effect	UTAUT2 + Newman & Sheth Model	Positive
H9	Young Voters' Behavioural Intention (YVBI) → Voters' Choice (VC)	Direct Effect	UTAUT2 + Newman & Sheth Model	Positive
H10	Young Voters' Behavioural Intention (YVBI) mediates the relationship between SMPE and VC	Mediation Effect	UTAUT2	Mediation
H11	Young Voters' Behavioural Intention (YVBI) mediates the relationship between SMEE and VC	Mediation Effect	UTAUT2	Mediation
H12	Young Voters' Behavioural Intention (YVBI) mediates the relationship between SMSI and VC	Mediation Effect	UTAUT2	Mediation
H13	Young Voters' Behavioural Intention (YVBI) mediates the relationship between SMFC and VC	Mediation Effect	UTAUT2	Mediation
H14	Young Voters' Behavioural Intention (YVBI) mediates the relationship between SMHM and VC	Mediation Effect	UTAUT2	Mediation
H15	Young Voters' Behavioural Intention (YVBI) mediates the relationship between SMH and VC	Mediation Effect	UTAUT2	Mediation
H16	Experience moderates the relationship between SMFC and YVBI	Moderation Effect	UTAUT2	Moderation
H17	Experience moderates the relationship between SMHM and YVBI	Moderation Effect	UTAUT2	Moderation
H18	Experience moderates the relationship between SMH and YVBI	Moderation Effect	UTAUT2	Moderation
H19	Experience moderates the relationship	Moderation	UTAUT2 +	Moderation

Hypothesis Relationship		Construct Category	Theoretical Basis	Expected Direction
	between SMH and VC	Effect	Newman & Sheth Model	
H20	Experience moderates the relationship between YVBI and VC	Moderation Effect	UTAUT2 + Newman & Sheth Model	Moderation
H21	The integrated UTAUT2 and Newman & Sheth's Model of Primary Voter Behaviour demonstrates explanatory and predictive power for voters' choice	Model Validation	Integrated Framework	Predictive

2.12 Conceptual Framework

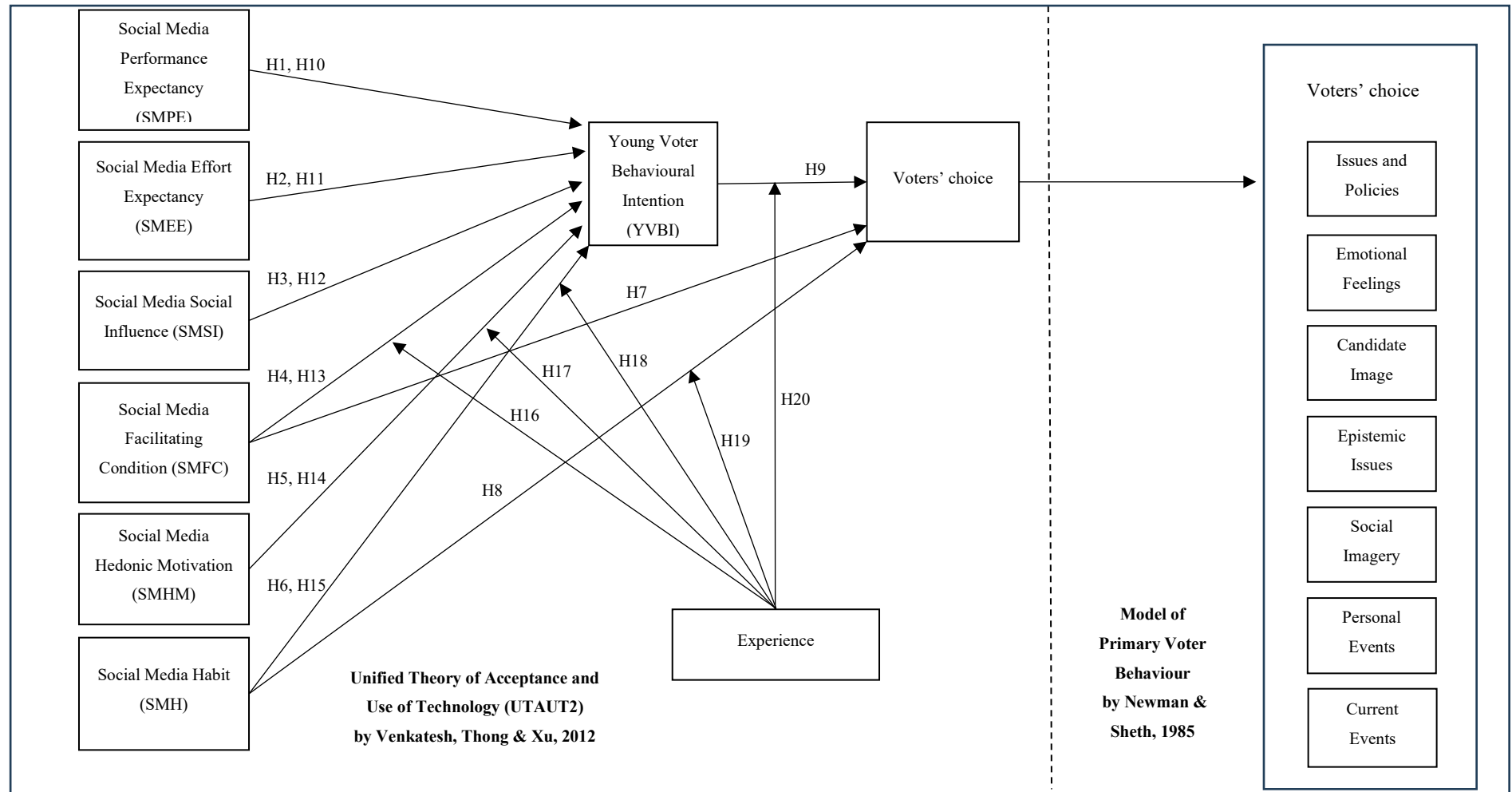


Figure 2.4 Conceptual Framework for Voters' Choice

This conceptual framework posits that Social Media Acceptance Constructs such as Social Media Performance Expectancy (SMPE), Social Media Effort Expectancy (SMEE), Social Media Social Influence (SMSI), Social Media Facilitating Conditions (SMFC), Social Media Hedonic Motivation (SMHM), and Social Media Habit (SMH) serve as independent variables (IVs). These constructs assess the extent to which young voters perceive social media as useful, easy to use, enjoyable, and socially reinforced for political participation. Drawing upon the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) by Venkatesh et al. (2012), the theory represented the psychological and technological drivers that shape users' motivation to utilise social media for political purposes.

The Behavioural Intention (YVBI) functions as a mediating variable, linking social media acceptance with actual voting outcomes. It captures the extent to which young voters plan to use social media to inform themselves, discuss political issues, and participate in political processes. Within this integrated model, Voter's Choice (VC) operates as the dependent variable (DV), representing the culmination of these online influences in tangible electoral behaviour. Adapted from the Model of Primary Voter Behaviour (Newman & Sheth, 1985), Voter's Choice encompasses seven sub-dimensions such as Voting Issues and Policies (VIP), Voting Emotional Feelings (VEF), Voting Candidate Image (VCI), Voting Epistemic Issues (VEI), Voting Social Imagery (VSI), Voting Personal Events (VPE), and Voting Current Events (VCE) which collectively illustrate how social media engagement translates into a voter's ultimate decision at the ballot box.

The integration of UTAUT2 and the Model of Primary Voter Behaviour offers a multidimensional explanation of how technological engagement through social media translates into political decision-making. While UTAUT2 explains the cognitive and motivational factors influencing technology adoption such as performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and hedonic motivation it does not extend to how such engagement affects actual political choices. The Model of Primary Voter Behaviour complements this limitation by addressing the psychological, emotional, and situational variables that shape voters' final decisions. This research captures both the technological acceptance stage and the decision-making, providing a comprehensive lens to understand young voters' political behaviour in Malaysia's evolving digital landscape by integrating these two frameworks. Social-media affordances thus mediate

between cognitive drivers of technology use and emotional dimensions of political decision-making.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlined the research methodology adopted to investigate the relationship between social media use and young voters' behavioural intention and electoral choices in Malaysia. The methodological framework was designed to ensure the collection of valid, reliable, and generalisable data to address the research objectives and hypotheses effectively. Rooted in the positivist paradigm, this research employs a quantitative research approach, aligning with the principles of objectivity, empirical measurement, and hypothesis testing.

The adoption of the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) as the theoretical lens necessitated the use of structured data collection instruments and statistical analysis techniques capable of evaluating complex causal relationships. Accordingly, this research utilised survey methodology, a widely accepted method in social science research for understanding attitudes, behaviours, and trends across large populations. The survey method also facilitates the collection of numerical data for robust statistical analysis, consistent with the principles of deductive reasoning and theory testing (Creswell, 2018).

The research targets young Malaysian voters aged 18 to 40, with Selangor selected as the geographical focus due to its demographic representativeness and political relevance. The sample was drawn using a multistage stratified sampling method to ensure adequate representation across gender, ethnicity, and age strata, thereby enhancing the research's generalisability. The research employed an online questionnaire adapted from validated constructs in the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) framework (Venkatesh et al., 2012) and the Model of Voter Choice Behaviour by Newman and Sheth (1985), ensuring both theoretical alignment and empirical rigour.

This chapter further details the research design, population and sampling strategy, data collection procedures, instrument development, pilot testing, normality and reliability testing, and data analysis plan. Emphasis is placed on the use of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), a technique particularly

suitable for studies with complex models and relatively small to medium sample sizes. The methodological approach presented herein was carefully constructed to ensure the research's internal and external validity, thus contributing meaningfully to the understanding of digital political communication and voter behaviour in Malaysia.

3.2 Research Design

This research employed quantitative research. Creswell (2018) provides a succinct description of quantitative research as a research approach that seeks to elucidate phenomena by gathering numerical data and thereafter subjecting them to analysis through mathematically grounded techniques, particularly statistics. Quantitative research is a methodology that uses statistical analysis and numerical data to measure and quantify many aspects of the world under investigation. Through the utilisation of statistical analysis, quantitative methodologies not only enabled the numerical depiction of events but also facilitated the identification of correlations between several variables. In essence, quantitative research can be characterised as a "top-down" approach. Drawing upon theoretical frameworks, researchers formulate predictions and construct a systematic approach to assess the validity of these hypotheses. The researcher acquired and evaluated data that can be measured numerically and subjected to statistical analysis (Creswell, 2018). In the concluding phase, one meticulously draws inferences from the conducted statistical analysis.

The research employed a survey approach. The participants responded to all the items included in the questionnaires. Survey research employs a systematic sampling technique and carefully constructed instruments to assess the characteristics, opinions, and behaviours of large populations with statistical accuracy. As stated by Groves and Lyberg (2021), this methodology emphasises survey quality, addressing issues of sampling error, measurement error, and respondent burden, particularly in complex data environments. Therefore, the questionnaire used in this research was formulated with clarity and validity in mind. Furthermore, Tourangeau, Kreuter, and Eckman (2020) emphasise that the cognitive dynamics of question-answering must be thoughtfully considered in survey construction to mitigate bias and enhance interpretability. In the context of political behaviour and digital engagement, such methodological rigour is essential for generating reliable data. Survey results have consistently played a central role in informing decisions across politics, policy, media, and academia (Wimmer &

Dominick, 2013), making them an indispensable tool for understanding human attitudes and societal trends.

Survey research can provide a quantitative account of trends, attitudes, or views by examining a sample of the population. It encompasses cross-sectional and longitudinal studies that collect data via questionnaires or structured interviews to generalise from a sample to a population (Al-Ababneh, 2020).

Using a quantitative approach, the research examined the associations between the independent variables and the dependent and moderating variables (age, gender, and experience). Quantitative research methods can help investigate and explain social phenomena with scientific objectivity by deriving knowledge from logical predictions based on direct observation (Babbie, 2020). This research design included online and face-to-face surveys to examine how young voters' acceptance of social media influences their behavioural intention to engage politically and how this intention shapes their voting choice.

Quantitative research employs measurable data to identify facts and trends within an investigation. Methods for collecting quantitative data are considerably more systematic than those for collecting qualitative data. A problem or inquiry is investigated quantitatively through the formulation of hypotheses derived from a theory. Ultimately, experiments and controlled, objective testing confirm or refute the theory. Each stage of the data collection and analysis process is standardised to eliminate bias. This method yields results that are valid, dependable, and applicable to a larger population, which is a significant advantage. The researcher employed a quantitative research method throughout the study, including the research design, data collection, analysis, and dissemination of findings.

Table 3.1
Research Design

Research Design	Data Collection	Maximum
Quantitative	Questionnaire	Young Voters (aged between 18 and 40 years old)

Table 3.1 indicates that a questionnaire was chosen as the instrument for data collection. The respondents were eligible voters aged 18 to 40, selected through stratified sampling. Figure 3.1 illustrates the research design flowchart.

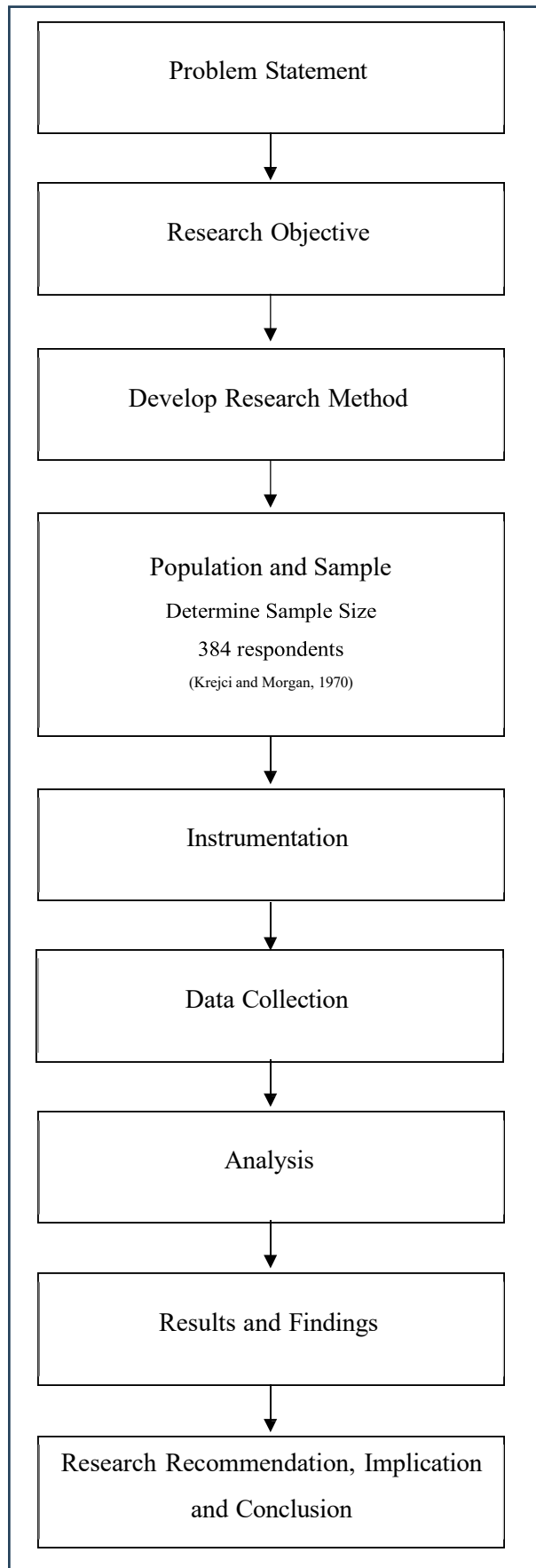


Figure 3.1 Research Design Flowchart

3.3 Population of Interest

The population for this research were the young voters in Malaysia. The number of voters was derived from voters' statistics by the Malaysia Youth Data Bank System (2021). The statistics provided a good representation of all registered young voters across the country. The population in this research were defined as registered young voters in Malaysia. These young, registered voters are avid social media users. In this research, young voters were defined as those aged 18 to 40 years, as defined by the Malaysia Youth Policy (MYP) of the Ministry of Youth and Sports Malaysia (2017). The bill lowering the minimum voting age from 21 to 18 was passed in July 2019 and first implemented during the Johor state election in February 2022.

This research explored how young voters' acceptance of social media, their behavioural intention to engage politically and how this intention shapes their voting choice. Therefore, these young voters must be avid social media users who follow and engage with political content. In addition, it is crucial to employ a robust technique to effectively target a specific demographic on social media, as this facilitates the accurate interpretation and expansion of research outcomes.

3.4 Research Sampling

Sampling is a crucial step in the research process, as it helps ensure the validity of the inferences drawn by the researcher from the underlying findings. A sample is a subset of a population selected in a manner representative of the entire population. Sampling involved selecting a representative portion, piece, or segment that accurately reflects the entire subject under investigation. The selection of a sample is determined by several factors, including the community's size and homogeneity, the sampling medium, its associated costs, and the desired level of accuracy. As Groves and Lyberg (2021) emphasised, a carefully designed sampling strategy enables researchers to optimise data quality while balancing cost and operational efficiency, especially in complex social settings. Utilising a representative sample of the entire population reduces the expenses, time, and personnel required to conduct the research. The accuracy of a sample depends on three factors. One of the key aspects of conducting research is selecting an appropriate sampling method. The two factors considered in this research were the quantity of samples collected and the frequency at which replies were

obtained. In order to obtain precise and reliable inferences from a given sample, the sampling methods employed must be well-structured and unambiguous. Probability methods and non-probability methods are the two forms of sampling techniques (Pace, 2021). Probability sampling methods employ random selection to ensure that each case within the population has an equivalent opportunity of being selected (Noor, Tajik & Golzar, 2021).

This research employed stratified sampling. Stratified sampling is a probability sampling technique that is widely used in survey research. The components of a population are often separated into groups or strata, where the components within each stratum are comparable in certain traits significant to the survey. Typically, each stratum is sampled individually using a technique that yields an unbiased estimate of the stratum total or mean. An estimator for the population total can then be obtained by adding these estimated stratum totals. The estimated population mean may also be calculated using a stratum-weighted average of the estimated stratum means. Stratification is used to improve a sample design's effectiveness in terms of cost and estimator precision.

Multistage sampling is employed to gather data from large and geographically diverse populations. This strategy is more precise and cost-effective than other techniques, such as simple random sampling, because it involves dividing the population into progressively smaller groups over time. Stratified sampling is commonly combined with multistage sampling to allow researchers to select groups based on their relevance to the research's objectives.

In this research, the location and target area were Selangor. Selangor was selected due to its status as the most populous and urbanised state in Malaysia, with a high concentration of digitally connected youth, making it a relevant context for examining social media-driven political participation. It has the highest number of young voters (Berita Harian, 2023) and represents almost the same percentage of the Malaysian population across ethnic groups and areas, particularly in urban areas. According to the Institute for Youth Research Malaysia (2022), the total number of young voters in Selangor amounts to 1,986,440. The sample was selected using stratified sampling, which considered factors such as age, gender, and race, based on demographic questions at the beginning of the questionnaire.

3.4.1 Sample Size

Sample size refers to the number of respondents included in a study and is a critical determinant of statistical power, estimation accuracy, and generalisability. The determination of sample size is a critical component in ensuring the robustness and validity of statistical analyses. As Hair, Sarstedt, Ringle, and Gudergan (2023) emphasise, sample size directly influences the statistical power, reliability, and generalizability of findings in structural equation modelling (SEM). In structural equation modelling, particularly Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), an adequate sample size is essential to ensure stable parameter estimates and reliable hypothesis testing. Recent methodological literature recommends the use of statistical power analysis rather than heuristic rules to determine minimum sample size requirements (Hair et al., 2022). For complex models involving multiple constructs, mediation, and moderation effects, a sample size exceeding 300 is generally considered sufficient to achieve robust statistical power and predictive accuracy (Sarstedt et al., 2020; Memon et al., 2020). In line with these recommendations, this study employs a sample size that exceeds these thresholds, thereby ensuring the reliability and validity of the structural model analysis.

The sample size for this research is determined based on the Table for Determination Sample Size by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). The population, as mentioned earlier are young voters aged 18 – 40 years old based on the data from Institute for Youth Research Malaysia (2022). In this research, young voters are defined from the eligibility age of voting 18 to 40 years old, which is defined by the Malaysia Youth Policy (2017). The sample population of Selangor includes 1,986,440 young voters. Table 3.2 shows the determined sample size by Krejcie and Morgan (1970).

Table 3.2

Table for Determination of Sample Size by Krejcie and Morgan (1970)

N	S	N	S	N	S	N	S	N	S
10	10	100	80	280	162	800	260	2800	335
15	14	110	86	290	165	850	265	3000	341
20	19	120	92	300	169	900	269	3500	346
25	24	130	97	320	175	950	274	4000	351
30	28	140	103	340	181	1000	278	4500	354
35	32	150	108	360	186	1100	285	5000	357
40	36	160	113	380	191	1200	291	6000	361

45	40	170	118	400	196	1300	297	7000	364
50	44	180	123	420	201	1400	302	8000	367
55	48	190	127	440	205	1500	306	9000	368
60	52	200	132	460	210	1600	310	10000	370
65	56	210	136	480	214	1700	313	15000	375
70	59	220	140	500	217	1800	317	20000	377
75	63	230	144	550	226	1900	320	30000	379
80	66	240	148	600	234	2000	322	40000	380
85	70	250	152	650	242	2200	327	50000	381
90	73	260	155	700	248	2400	331	75000	383
95	76	270	159	750	254	2600	335	1000000	384

Based on the sample size determination guidelines proposed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), the minimum required sample size for this study was 384 respondents. To accommodate the stratified sampling design and ensure sufficient representation across the defined strata, the study targeted a slightly larger sample size of 400 respondents, as illustrated in Figure 3.2. This approach is consistent with recommendations in quantitative research to increase sample size beyond the minimum threshold to enhance statistical power and improve the robustness of parameter estimates (Hair et al., 2022).

A total of 475 responses were successfully collected. Following preliminary data screening procedures, including the examination of missing data and detection of outliers, 64 responses were excluded due to incompleteness or anomalous patterns. Consequently, a final sample of 411 valid responses was retained and utilised for subsequent analyses, thereby exceeding the minimum sample size requirement and ensuring the dataset's adequacy for structural equation modelling.

As previously mentioned, stratified sampling was employed to select the sample group. According to Lohr (2021), stratified sampling improves the efficiency of survey estimates by ensuring that each subgroup is proportionally represented, especially when there are known differences across strata. This approach is especially valuable in studies involving heterogeneous populations, such as young voters with varying demographic and political characteristics.

The sample was selected based on a multistage stratified sampling technique. The respondents were stratified by age, gender, and race. This research involved 4 strata. The sampling method for this research is explained in Figure 3.2.

1. Level One

Selangor was selected as the research location because it is the most populous state in Malaysia and has a notably high share of young voters, exceeding those of the other 13 states.

2. Level Two

The population of Selangor is segmented by gender. Subsequently, it will be subdivided into three distinct ethnic groups: Malays, Chinese, and Indians.

3. Level Three

The various ethnic groupings were subdivided into distinct strata, characterised by features that rendered them mutually incompatible. A random selection was made, comprising 0.020% of Malay, Chinese, and Indian voters. The individuals selected for this sampling method constituted 0.020% of the total population of young voters, amounting to 1,986,440 individuals residing in Selangor and aged 18 to 40 years. Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) Table for Determining Sample Size of a known community was used to divide the 400-person sample by the total population. The demographic under consideration comprised young voters, namely those aged 18 to 40 years. This information was obtained from the data of the Institute for Youth Research Malaysia (2022).

4. Level Four

The sample for this research has been selected from various areas within Selangor and included in its entirety. Figure 3.2 refers to the process of the multistage stratified sampling method. It has 4 strata levels that divide the population by gender, then by ethnic groups.

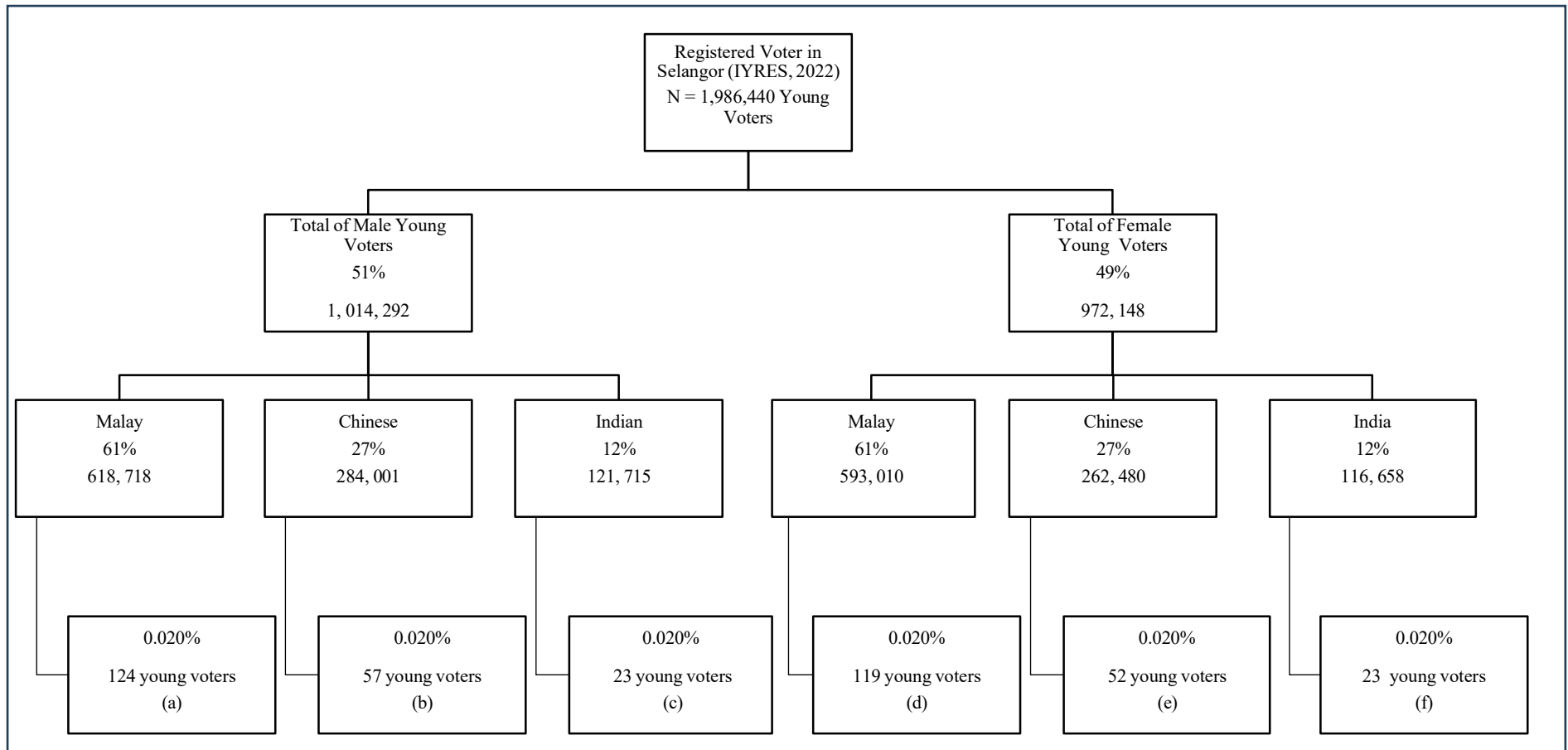


Figure 3.2 Flow chart of the process for multistage stratified sampling method.

3.5 Research Instruments

Research instruments are essential tools for collecting data in a research project, and their selection plays a pivotal role in ensuring the accuracy and credibility of the findings. The appropriateness of a research instrument must align with the research's objectives, methodology, and data analysis strategy. As Creswell and Creswell (2018) emphasise, the quality of data collected is directly influenced by the design and suitability of the instrument used. In survey-based research, questionnaires are the primary instruments for collecting standardised responses, whereas in qualitative studies, semi-structured interview guides are commonly used to elicit rich, contextual insights. Undoubtedly, the research tool has a pivotal role in this research. To begin any analysis, it is important to locate the research instrument. The accuracy of research findings depends on the appropriate selection and utilisation of research tools. Various research tools are required for different domains. When employing the survey research approach, the primary instrument for data collection is the questionnaire. In contrast, to conduct a comprehensive interview, a topic guide comprising semi-structured questions will be used as the research instrument. A research instrument served as the primary tool for data collection and analysis. The unprocessed data will be aggregated and subsequently analysed as research findings. Recently, Mohajan (2018) underscores that well-constructed instruments are vital for minimising measurement error and enhancing the reliability and validity of research outcomes, particularly in studies involving human behaviour and attitudes.

3.6 Instrument Development

In this research, a published instrument from the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) model (Venkatesh et al., 2003; Venkatesh, Thong & Xu, 2012) and the Model of Primary Voter Behaviour (Newman & Sheth, 1985) was adopted and adapted. Using existing validated instruments is common in survey research because these scales have been previously tested for reliability and construct validity (Kitchenham & Pfleeger, 2002).

The UTAUT2 model extends the original Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) developed by Venkatesh, Morris, Davis and Davis (2003) by adding hedonic motivation, price value, and habit as new determinants of behavioural intention and use behaviour. UTAUT2 has been widely applied to examine technology adoption and digital engagement across different contexts, including social media use and online participation (Ahmed et al., 2023; Blut et al., 2022; Baabdullah et al., 2014). Venkatesh et al. (2016) further synthesised the model's applications and suggested its suitability for emerging technology-driven social contexts such as political communication and citizen participation.

Guided by UTAUT2, this research measured six independent constructs: performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, facilitating conditions, hedonic motivation, and habit. Each construct was operationalised using multiple items rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The dependent variable, behavioural intention (YVBI), was measured similarly using seven reflective items adapted from prior social media acceptance studies.

In order to capture the outcome dimension of actual voters' choice behaviour, the study employed items from the Model of Primary Voter Behaviour proposed by Newman and Sheth (1985). This model conceptualises voters' decision-making as a multifactor process encompassing seven dimensions: (1) issues and policies, (2) emotional feelings, (3) candidate image, (4) epistemic issues, (5) social imagery, (6) personal events, and (7) current events. Each dimension reflects a distinct motivational pathway influencing the voter's final choice. The items were adapted to the Malaysian context to reflect contemporary political issues and the dynamics of digital campaigning observed during the 15th General Election (GE15).

The integration of UTAUT2 and Newman and Sheth's model, therefore, provided a comprehensive measurement framework that links social media acceptance (technology adoption perspective) to voting choice (behavioural decision perspective). This dual-model approach ensures theoretical coherence between cognitive-motivational predictors and behavioural outcomes, aligning with the study's aim of explaining how young voters' social media use translates into political participation and electoral decision-making.

3.6.1 Content and Face Validity Assessment

Prior to the main data collection, the questionnaires underwent content and face validity assessments to ensure clarity, conceptual relevance, and contextual appropriateness for young Malaysian voters. Two experts were invited to review the instrument: an academic expert in political communication and social media research, and a political practitioner with experience in Malaysian electoral campaigning. Both experts evaluated the adapted items derived from the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) and the Model of Primary Voter Behaviour (Newman & Sheth, 1985), focusing on wording clarity, construct alignment, and cultural suitability. Minor modifications were made to enhance phrasing precision and ensure the items reflected the Malaysian sociopolitical context while maintaining the theoretical integrity of the original constructs.

In addition, a face validity assessment was conducted with a small group of postgraduate students ($n = 10$) representing the study's target age group (18–40 years). The participants were asked to evaluate the questionnaire for clarity of wording, sequencing, and overall comprehension. Their feedback confirmed that the questions were clear and easy to understand, though minor rewording was applied to improve readability and flow.

These validation procedures ensured that the final instrument demonstrated adequate content and face validity before pilot testing and full-scale data collection, thereby reinforcing the reliability and contextual fit of the adapted measures for the young voters' population.

3.6.2 Research Constructs and Items

This section provides a concise overview of the model's historical background and presents the components utilised in developing these constructs within the scope of this research.

3.6.2.1 Social Media Performance Expectancy (SMPE)

According to Venkatesh, Morris, Davis, and Davis (2003), performance expectancy refers to the extent to which an individual perceives that utilising a system

would enhance their job performance. There is an expectation that utilising technology for a particular activity will enhance the user's performance. Table 3.3 presents an item that is accessible for the basic constructions of Social Media Performance Expectancy (SMPE).

Table 3.3
Items for Social Media Performance Expectancy (SMPE)

Code	Items	References
SMPE1	As a voter, I find social media useful in my daily life to find more information on politics.	Adapted from Venkatesh Thong & Xu, 2012;
SMPE2	As a voter, using social media to gain knowledge on politics increases my chances of achieving tasks that are important to me.	Brown & Venkatesh, 2005; Venkatesh et al. (2003),
SMPE3	As a voter, using social media to gain knowledge on politics helps me accomplish things more quickly.	
SMPE4	As a voter, using social media increases my knowledge on politics and my productivity.	
SMPE5	As a voter, using social media can help improve the quality of my existing knowledge on politics.	Adapted from Puriwat & Tripopsakul, 2021
SMPE6	As a voter, I will be able to complete my duties to vote more effectively if I use social media for information on politics.	Adapted from Zeebaree et al. 2022.
SMPE7	As a voter, social media allows citizens to quickly and easily obtain the information they need.	

3.6.2.2 Social Media Effort Expectancy (SMEE)

Performance expectancy refers to the perceived ease of utilising the system. (Venkatesh et al., 2003). The research explores whether young people think it is easy to use social media to get involved in politics. If they do, it might make them more likely to accept social media and get involved in politics. Table 3.4 presents an item that is accessible for the basic constructions of Social Media Effort Expectancy (SMEE).

Table 3.4
Items for Social Media Effort Expectancy (SMEE)

Code	Items	References
SMEE1	Learning how to use social media for is easy for me.	Adapted from Venkatesh Thong & Xu, 2012;
SMEE2	My interaction with social media is clear and understandable.	Brown & Venkatesh,

SMEE3	I find social media easy to use.	2005; Venkatesh et al.
SMEE4	It is easy for me to become skilful at using social media.	(2003)
SMEE5	I believe that I will have knowledge to access and use social media easily.	Adapted from Zeebaree et al. 2022.
SMEE6	I expect the use of social media for political participation is clear and understandable.	Adapted from Puriwat & Tripopsakul, 2021.

3.6.2.3 Social Media Social Influence (SMSI)

Social influence refers to the extent to which an individual perceives that influential individuals believe that he or she should utilise the system (Venkatesh et al., 2003). It represents the social pressure from family, friends, and others to accept new technologies. In this research, politically engaged young voters with strong social ties who utilise the latest online technologies may be more likely to use them. Table 3.5 presents an item that is accessible for the basic constructions of Social Media Social Influence (SMSI).

Table 3.5
Items for Social Media Social Influence (SMSI)

Code	Items	References
SMSI1	People who are important to me think that I should use social media for political participation.	Adapted from Venkatesh et al. (2012), Committee on Communication for Behaviour Change in the 21st Century (2002)
SMSI2	People who influence my behaviour think that I should use social media for political participation.	
SMSI3	People whose opinions that I value prefer that I use social media for political participation.	
SMSI4	People around me consider it is appropriate to use social media for political participation.	Adapted from Zeebaree et al. 2022.
SMSI5	In the minds of those who have an impact on my actions, I should take advantage of using social media for political participation.	
SMSI6	Political discussions with friends contribute to increasing and deepening social relations with individuals.	
SMSI7	I am encouraged to use social media for political	

participation by those who have an impact on my life.

3.6.2.4 Social Media Facilitating Conditions (SMFC)

Facilitating conditions are defined as the degree to which an individual believes that an organisational and technical infrastructure exists to support the use of the system (Venkatesh et al., 2003). For political participation through social media, facilitating conditions for young voters would include smartphones, the Internet, tablets, and computers. Table 3.6 presents an item that is accessible for the basic constructions of Social Media Facilitating Conditions (SMFC).

Table 3.6
Items for Social Media Facilitating Conditions (SMFC)

Code	Items	References
SMFC1	I have the resources necessary to use social media for political participation.	Adapted from Venkatesh et al. (2012), Committee on Communication for Behaviour Change in the 21st Century (2002)
SMFC2	I have the knowledge necessary to use social media for political participation.	
SMFC3	Social media is compatible with other technologies I use for political participation.	
SMFC4	I can get help from others when I have difficulties using social media for political participation.	
SMFC5	Social media work well with other platforms I use.	Adapted from Zeebaree et al. 2022.
SMFC6	I have enough Internet experience to use social media for political participation.	
SMFC7	There is no doubt of the government support towards the use social media for political participation.	

3.6.2.5 Social Media Hedonic Motivation (SMHM)

Hedonic Motivation is a theoretical construct that measures a user's perceived amusement value of the technology (Venkatesh et al., 2012). It refers to the enjoyment or pleasure derived from utilising technology, and it has been shown to influence technological acceptability and use significantly. In this research, young voters will intend to use social media if they perceive it as fun. Table 3.7 presents an item that is accessible for the basic constructions of Social Media Hedonic Motivation (SMHM).

Table 3.7

Items for Social Media Hedonic Motivation (SMHM)

Code	Items	References
SMHM1	Using social media for political participation is fun.	Adapted from Brown and Venkatesh (2005), Venkatesh et al (2012)
SMHM2	Using social media for political participation is enjoyable.	
SMHM3	Using social media for political participation is very entertaining.	
SMHM4	Using social media for political participation is very exciting.	
SMHM5	Using social media for political participation is stimulating.	
SMHM6	Using social media for political participation is gratifying.	
SMHM7	Using social media for political participation is amusing.	

3.6.2.6 Social Media Habit (SMH)

The concept of habit has been operationalised in two distinct ways: first, as past behaviour (Kim & Malhotra, 2005), and second, as the extent to which an individual considers an action to be spontaneous (Limayem et al., 2007). Depending on the level of engagement and familiarity with a target technology, experience can result in varying degrees of habit formation. A habit is the unintentional use of technology for any task. Young voters' behavioural intention will be predicted by social media use habits, social media addiction, perceived need to use social media, and the perceived naturalness of social media use. Table 3.8 presents an item that is accessible for the basic constructions of Social Media Habit (SMH).

Table 3.8

Items for Social Media Habit (SMH)

Code	Items	References
SMH1	The use of the social media has become a habit for me.	Adapted from Brown and Venkatesh (2005), Venkatesh et al (2012)
SMH2	I am addicted to using social media.	
SMH3	I must use social media.	
SMH4	Using social media has become natural to me.	
SMH5	I often find myself using social media longer than intended.	Adapted from Al-Menayes, 2015.
SMH6	I often find life to be boring without social media.	

SMH7 Time passes by without me feeling it when I am using social media.

3.6.2.7 Young Voters Behavioural Intention (YVBI)

Behavioural intention is a construct that reflects an individual's preparedness to engage in a specific behaviour. According to Ajzen (2002), it is commonly believed that this factor directly influences behaviour. Within the framework of the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2), behavioural intention was utilised to predict whether users would utilise a particular system or technology (Venkatesh et al., 2012). This research used behavioural intention to predict young voters' acceptance of social media for political participation by examining their intention to continue using social media, use it in daily life, and use it more frequently. Table 3.9 presents an item that is accessible for the basic constructions of Young Voters' Behavioural Intention (YVBI).

Table 3.9
Items for Young Voters' Behavioural Intention (YVBI)

Code	Items	References
YVBI1	I intend to continue using social media for political participation in the future.	Adapted from Venkatesh et al. (2012), Committee on Communication for Behaviour Change in the 21st Century (2002)
YVBI2	I will always try to use social media for political participation in my daily life.	
YVBI3	I plan to continue to use social media for political participation frequently.	
YVBI4	I will use social media for political participation when I have a need.	Adapted from Zeebaree et al. 2022.
YVBI5	I predict to use social media for political participation in a short time.	
YVBI6	I like to interact with my candidate using social media.	
YVBI7	I like to use social media for political participation.	

3.6.2.8 Voting Issues and Policies (VIP)

A combination of concerns and policies encompasses significant topics and guiding ideas across four distinct domains: economic policy, foreign policy, social policy, and leadership characteristics. These factors serve as indicators of the candidate's perceived value, specifically about the logical or practical objectives of their platform. The evaluation of this element is conducted by utilising a benefits profile (Newman & Sheth, 1985). These variables were selected after consulting previous surveys, including the Merdeka Centre (2023) and Ilham Centre (2023) surveys. Table 3.10 presents an item that is accessible for the basic constructions of Issues and Policies (VIP).

Table 3.10
Items for Voting Issues and Policies (VIP)

Code	Items	References
VIP1	The candidate I will vote for will be the best person to create job opportunities.	Adapted from Voters' Choice Behaviour Model
VIP2	The candidate I will vote for will be the best person to resolve the tax (e.g., GST, SST) issues.	by Newman & Sheth, 1985.
VIP3	The candidate I will vote for will be the best person to resolve issue of inflation.	
VIP4	The candidate I will vote for will be the best person to fight corruption in the country.	
VIP5	The candidate I will vote for will be the best person to stabilise the exchange rate.	
VIP6	The candidate I will vote for will be the best person to reduce poverty.	
VIP7	The candidate I will vote for will be the best person to provide quality education.	

3.6.2.9 Voting Emotional Feelings (VEF)

Emotional feelings constitute the affective component of the voting process, specifically sentiments such as optimism, responsibility, and patriotism that a candidate evokes (Newman & Sheth, 1985). These components were measured using the sentiments of voters who are unaffected by a candidate's personality, as they may base their opinions solely on the candidate's proposed policies. Alternatively, a voter may

know about the candidate's personality but remain indifferent to it. Table 3.11 presents an item that is accessible for the basic constructions of Voting Emotional Feelings (VEF).

Table 3.11
Items for Voting Emotional Feelings (VEF)

Code	Items	References
VEF1	Voting for my candidate would make me feel patriotic.	Adapted from Voters'
VEF2	Voting for my candidate would make me feel hopeful.	Choice Behaviour Model
VEF3	Voting for my candidate would make me feel excited.	by Newman & Sheth,
VEF4	Voting for my candidate would make me feel responsible.	1985.
VEF5	Voting for my candidate would make me feel involved.	
VEF6	Voting for my candidate would make me feel optimistic.	
VEF7	Voting for my candidate would make me feel satisfied.	

3.6.2.10 Voting Candidate Image (VCI)

Candidate image refers to the perception of a candidate based on salient personality attributes that are supposed to provide insight into the candidate's qualities and characteristics. This component is derived from a personality profile that assesses one or more characteristics of the candidate's perceived image. The measurement of this component was based on a personality trait profile that encompasses one or more dimensions of the candidate's image (Newman & Sheth, 1985). It was also recently employed in current research on the attitudes of voters who are unaffected by a candidate's personality and may base their opinions solely on the candidate's proposed programmes. Alternatively, a voter may possess knowledge about the candidate's personality but remain indifferent towards it. Table 3.12 below presents an item that is accessible for the basic constructions of Voting Candidate Image (VCI).

Table 3.12
Items for Voting Candidate Image (VCI)

Code	Items	References
VCI1	I will choose the candidate that is honest.	Adapted from Voters'
VCI2	I will choose the candidate that is trustworthy.	Choice Behaviour Model
VCI3	I will choose the candidate that is compassionate.	by Newman & Sheth, 1985.
VCI4	I will choose a candidate that is religious.	

- VCI5 I will choose the candidate that is incorruptible.
- VCI6 I will choose the candidate that has a good leadership skill.
- VCI7 I will choose a local candidate.
-

3.6.2.11 Voting Epistemic Issues (VEI)

Epistemic issues concern the justifications that would support the perceived fulfilment of curiosity, the acquisition of knowledge, and the fulfilment of exploratory demands presented by the candidate as a means of introducing novelty or differentiation. The measurement of this component was conducted based on a profile of epistemic concerns. The assumption was that it is unidimensional (Newman & Sheth, 1985). Epistemic also refers to the ability of "the many" to make accurate decisions, which aims to legitimise democracy by reference to this ability. Epistemic democrats back their views with extensive evidence from the history of political philosophy and a set of models. Table 3.13 presents the items listed as accessible for the basic constructions of Voting Epistemic Issues (VEI).

Table 3.13
Items for Voting Epistemic Issues (VEI)

Code	Items	References
VEI1	I am concerned about the future of the nation after the election in terms of citizen cost of living.	Adapted from Voters' Choice Behaviour Model by Newman & Sheth, 1985.
VEI2	I am concerned about the future of the nation after the election in terms of free education.	
VEI3	I am concerned about the future of the nation after the election in terms of improving healthcare.	
VEI4	I am concerned about the future of the nation after the election in terms of women empowerment.	
VEI5	I feel worried if I do not get any incentive from the government (BSH) anymore.	
VEI6	I feel worried if my candidate is unable to implement their promises according to their party's manifestos.	

VEI7 I feel worried if my candidate is unable to fight for people's welfare.

3.6.2.12 Voting Social Imagery (VSI)

The concept of social imagery encompasses primary and secondary reference groups that are inclined to support the candidates. The perception of these candidates was influenced by their associations with various demographic, social, cultural/ethnic, and political/ideological aspects of society, which can lead to the formation of positive or negative stereotypes (Newman & Sheth, 1985). A voter's mental image of a politician was influenced by various factors, including demographic, social, cultural/ethnic, and political/ideological affiliations, which might shape their inclination to support a certain candidate. Table 3.14 presents an item that is accessible for the basic constructions of Voting Social Imagery (VSI).

Table 3.14
Items for Voting Social Imagery (VSI)

Code	Items	References
VSI1	I proudly choose a candidate that has professional background.	Adapted from Voters' Choice Behaviour Model
VSI2	I find it acceptable if my candidate comes from any religion.	by Newman & Sheth,
VSI3	I feel irritated if my candidate is unable to associate himself with young people.	1985.
VSI4	I feel bitter if the candidate displays his sophisticated lifestyle.	
VSI5	I choose a party that represents a single race.	Adapted from Musa &
VSI6	I choose a party that represents a multiracial community.	Sualman, 2020.
VSI7	I do not choose political party that are not clean or practices abuses.	

3.6.2.13 Voting Personal Events (VPE)

Personal events are circumstances in an individual's personal life that may prompt a voter to alter their voting preference in favour of an alternative candidate. The candidate garners utility or value from specific personal or familial circumstances that precede the voter's deliberation. The measurement of this component was based on a selected set of contingencies that indicate one or more dimensions of the candidate's

conditional utility (Newman & Sheth, 1985). Table 3.15 presents an item that is accessible for the basic constructions of Voting Personal Events (VPE).

Table 3.15
Items for Voting Personal Events (VPE)

Code	Items	References
VPE1	I would change my vote if the candidate I supported committed a serious crime.	Adapted from Voters' Choice Behaviour Model
VPE2	I would change my vote if the candidate I supported lied about events in his / her private life.	by Newman & Sheth, 1985 and Falkowski & Cwalina, 2002.
VPE3	I would change my vote if the candidate I supported was involved in a business scandal.	
VPE4	I would change my vote if the candidate I supported was involved in a political scandal.	
VPE5	I would change my vote if the candidate I supported changed his / her stand on an issue.	
VPE6	I would change my vote if the candidate I supported cheated on his tax returns.	
VPE7	I would change my vote if the candidate I supported became too seriously ill to work effectively.	

3.6.2.14 Voting Current Events (VCE)

Current events refer to the "campaign dynamics" encompassing the range of topics and ideas that emerge and evolve throughout a political campaign (Newman & Sheth, 1985). These dynamics encompass both domestic and international factors that may influence a voter's decision to move their support from one candidate to another. The candidate derives usefulness or worth from their adoption of specific issue positions and policy stances that affect various circumstances. The measurement of this component was based on a selected set of contingencies that indicate one or more dimensions of the conditional utility of a candidate. Table 3.16 presents an item that is accessible for the basic constructions of Voting Current Events (VCE).

Table 3.16
Items for Voting Current Events (VCE)

Code	Items	References
VCE1	The tax issue affected my vote.	Adapted from Voters' Choice Behaviour Model
VCE2	The political scandal affected my vote.	by Newman & Sheth, 1985.
VCE3	The issue of misuse of power by politician affected my vote.	
VCE4	The policies of the previous government had greatly improved the socioeconomic status of the people.	
VCE5	Political stability affected my vote.	
VCE6	I feel scared towards the country sovereignty due to the influx of foreign workers.	Adapted from Wan Mohamed, 2020.
VCE7	I feel nervous about the future of the country if there is a change in the government after the election.	

3.7 Pilot Test

Pilot research is the first step of the entire research protocol and is often a smaller-scale study that assists in planning and modifying the main research. Pilot research is an essential initial phase in the research process that enables researchers to assess the feasibility and potential of a new intervention before embarking on a comprehensive inquiry (Aschbrenner et al., 2022; Jaffar et al., 2021). It is a smaller-scale version of primary research used to assess and improve methodology, tools, and practices. Prior to the main research, a pilot study is conducted to identify potential concerns and provide guidance on necessary revisions. This ensures the reliability and precision of the research findings. Pilot studies are highly advantageous in mitigating the risks associated with flaws in research design, such as the absence of explicit instructions, improper utilisation of sampling methods, or failure to anticipate logistical issues (Malmqvist et al., 2019). Recent research has shown that they also aid in assessing the feasibility of research, including the necessary time and financial resources and the ease of finding and retaining volunteers (Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2020).

The respondents of this pilot research were young voters from Selangor. The purpose of this pilot test was to identify weaknesses in the design and instrumentation and to provide proxy data to inform the selection of a probability sample. It should

therefore draw subjects from the target population and simulate the procedures and protocols for data collection. If an online survey or survey questionnaire is distributed online, the pilot test questionnaires are distributed online to imitate the actual research. The size of the pilot group may range from 25 to 100 subjects, depending on the method to be tested (Cooper & Schindler, 2011). Therefore, Table 3.17 presents the demographic information for the pilot test.

A pilot test was conducted prior to the main data collection to assess the reliability, clarity, and validity of the measurement instrument. The pilot test involved a smaller sample of respondents representing the target population of young voters. In this research, the pilot study was conducted with 31 young voters in Selangor.

The purpose of the pilot study was threefold. First, it ensured that the survey items were clearly understood and contextually appropriate within the Malaysian political environment. Second, it enabled the identification and refinement of ambiguous or redundant items. Third, it provided preliminary evidence of internal consistency, indicating that the constructs adapted from UTAUT2 and voter behaviour models were suitable for measuring social media acceptance in a political context. The results of the pilot test informed minor revisions to the questionnaire, thereby enhancing the overall quality and validity of the instrument used in the main study.

Table 3.17
Distribution of Respondents' Demographic Information for Pilot Research

Variable Name		N	%
Gender	Male	5	16.1
	Female	26	83.9
		31	100
Age	18-20	8	25.8
	21-23	21	67.7
	24-26	2	6.5
		31	100
Level of Education	SPM	1	3.2
	STPM	1	3.2
	Diploma	8	25.8
	Degree	21	67.7
		31	100
Race	Malay	30	96.8
	Chinese	1	3.2

		31	100
Monthly Income	Less than RM2, 500.00	27	87.1
	RM2, 500.00 - RM4, 849.00	1	3.2
	RM4, 850.00 - RM10, 959.00	3	9.7
		31	100
Registered Voter	Yes	31	100
	No	0	0
		31	100
Voted in the last General Election	Yes	31	100
	No	0	0
		31	100
Use social media for political participation	Never	3	9.7
	Less than 1 hour	12	38.7
	2 - 3 hours	9	29
	4 - 5 hours	4	12.9
	6 hours and more	3	9.7
		31	100
Experience in using social media to search for political information	Less than 2 years	30	96.8
	2 - 3 years	1	3.2
	4 - 5 years	0	0
	More than 5 years	0	0
		31	100

Table 3.17 shows that 83.9% of the young voters who participated in this pilot test were female, and 16.1% were male. Most of the participants, aged 21-23, have less than 2 years of experience using social media to search for political information. In addition, all the participants are registered voters and voted in the 15th General Election.

3.7.1 Normality Test

Normality testing is a fundamental step in the preliminary analysis of data, particularly in pilot studies, where understanding data distribution is crucial for selecting appropriate statistical tests. Normality refers to how well the data conform to a normal distribution, an assumption underlying many parametric statistical techniques. Normality testing is an essential step in data analysis, as it ensures the appropriate use of statistical methods and the validity of the conclusions drawn from the data. This assumption underpins many parametric statistical techniques, and its violation can

compromise the validity of inferential conclusions. As Gosselin (2024) emphasises, while statistical tests such as the Shapiro-Wilk and Kolmogorov-Smirnov remain standard tools for assessing normality, researchers must be cautious when interpreting their results, especially in small samples, where p-values can be misleading. Instead, a combination of statistical tests and visual methods, such as Q-Q plots and histograms, is recommended to assess distributional assumptions more robustly. This multi-method approach enhances the reliability of decisions about whether to use parametric or non-parametric analyses, thereby strengthening the methodological rigour of the research.

Employing normality tests such as the Shapiro-Wilk or Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests helps researchers determine whether to apply parametric or nonparametric methods for further analysis. Importantly, researchers are cautioned against relying solely on p-values from normality tests, given their sensitivity to sample size, and are encouraged to complement these tests with visual inspections, such as Q-Q plots and histograms (Razali & Wah, 2019).

Recent studies emphasise the need for robust assessment methods in pilot studies, where limited sample sizes may skew data interpretations (Elliott & Woodward, 2020). Additionally, understanding normality in pilot research data helps refine research designs for larger-scale studies by ensuring that the selected statistical methods align with the data's characteristics.

Normality testing not only serves as a diagnostic tool but also helps researchers avoid Type I and II errors, ultimately contributing to the overall reliability and validity of pilot studies (Yap & Sim, 2019). Therefore, incorporating normality testing in the initial phase of pilot studies is essential for guiding proper data analysis and ensuring the accuracy of research findings.

The importance of normality testing lies in the fact that many statistical methods, such as the t-test and analysis of variance, assume normality. If the data deviates significantly from a normal distribution, the validity of these parametric tests may be compromised, necessitating the use of non-parametric alternatives. Several tests have been developed to assess normality, each with distinct strengths and limitations. Among the most commonly used are the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, the Shapiro-Wilk test, and the Jarque-Bera test. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test assesses the goodness-of-fit between the sample distribution and a theoretical normal distribution. In contrast, the Shapiro-Wilk test is particularly effective at detecting departures from normality in small samples. The Jarque-Bera test, in contrast, assesses normality based on skewness

and kurtosis values. As Hatem et al. (2022) emphasise, combining numerical tests with visual methods such as Q-Q plots and histograms enhances the robustness of normality assessment, especially in behavioural and social science research where data distributions may be complex.

The choice of a normality test depends on the characteristics of the data, such as sample size and distribution shape. For small sample sizes, normality tests may have limited power to detect deviations from normality, whereas for large sample sizes, even small deviations can yield significant results.

In this pilot study, most of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov significance levels were 0.05 or below, except for 1 variable, VEF. Table 3.18 presents the results of the normality tests for the pilot study.

Table 3.18
Normality Test for Pilot Research

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
SMPE	0.25	31	<.001	0.80	31	<.001
SMEE	0.31	31	<.001	0.66	31	<.001
SMSI	0.20	31	0.004	0.87	31	0.001
SMFC	0.18	31	0.016	0.90	31	0.009
SMHM	0.16	31	0.049	0.92	31	0.024
SMH	0.17	31	0.024	0.87	31	0.002
YVBI	0.19	31	0.006	0.90	31	0.008
VIP	0.19	31	0.005	0.85	31	<.001
VEF	0.14	31	0.098	0.91	31	0.011
VCI	0.29	31	<.001	0.78	31	<.001
VEI	0.29	31	<.001	0.77	31	<.001
VSI	0.20	31	0.003	0.87	31	0.002
VPE	0.26	31	<.001	0.77	31	<.001
VCE	0.22	31	<.001	0.85	31	<.001

An assessment of skewness and kurtosis was performed to evaluate the univariate normality of the data. Table 3.19 presents the skewness and kurtosis results from the pilot research. All items recorded skewness values between -2.21 and 0.74 and kurtosis values between -1.45 and 4.58 , which were within the acceptable range (Kline, 2016; Hair et al., 2022). These results indicate that the data were approximately

normally distributed and suitable for PLS-SEM analysis. The slight negative skewness observed in most items suggests that respondents generally expressed positive agreement towards statements related to social media use for political participation. Therefore, no corrective transformation was necessary.

Table 3.19
Skewness and Kurtosis Value for Pilot Research

Items	Skewness	Kurtosis
SMPE1	-1.37	0.70
SMPE2	-0.95	-0.38
SMPE3	-0.94	-0.05
SMPE4	-0.97	-0.15
SMPE5	-0.81	-0.25
SMPE6	-0.86	-0.33
SMPE7	-0.81	-0.25
SMEE1	-1.27	0.76
SMEE2	-1.67	2.14
SMEE3	-2.21	4.51
SMEE4	-1.92	3.15
SMEE5	-1.67	2.14
SMEE6	-1.55	1.50
SMSI1	-1.06	0.48
SMSI2	-1.02	0.95
SMSI3	-1.17	1.08
SMSI4	-0.57	-0.51
SMSI5	-0.94	-0.05
SMSI6	-1.08	0.22
SMSI7	-0.53	-0.60
SMFC1	-0.18	-1.35
SMFC2	-0.76	-0.05
SMFC3	-1.06	1.65
SMFC4	-0.53	-0.60
SMFC5	0.74	-0.46
SMFC6	-0.74	0.46
SMFC7	-0.29	-0.86
SMHM1	-0.47	-0.43
SMHM2	-0.37	-0.25
SMHM3	-0.50	-0.53

SMHM4	-0.37	-0.65
SMHM5	-0.05	-0.88
SMHM6	-0.13	-0.99
SMHM7	-0.20	-0.95
SMH1	-0.85	-0.52
SMH2	-1.06	0.48
SMH3	-0.97	-0.15
SMH4	-0.97	-0.15
SMH5	-0.69	-0.40
SMH6	-0.82	-0.13
SMH7	-0.97	-0.15
YVB11	-0.61	0.15
YVB12	-0.67	-0.18
YVB13	-0.37	-0.92
YVB14	-0.56	0.46
YVB15	-0.45	-0.31
YVB16	-0.45	-0.45
YVB17	-0.53	-0.61
VIP1	-0.50	-1.12
VIP2	-0.29	-0.86
VIP3	-0.53	-0.94
VIP4	-1.07	-0.19
VIP5	-0.85	-0.52
VIP6	-0.81	-0.76
VIP7	-0.85	-0.52
VEF1	-0.29	-0.67
VEF2	-0.69	-0.40
VEF3	-0.39	-0.39
VEF4	-0.64	-0.57
VEF5	-0.78	-0.36
VEF6	-0.64	-0.71
VEF7	-1.29	1.83
VCI1	-1.75	3.64
VCI2	-1.27	0.76
VCI3	-1.27	0.76
VCI4	-0.47	-1.45
VCI5	-1.10	0.77
VCI6	-1.27	0.76

VCI7	-1.88	4.07
VEI1	-1.08	0.22
VEI2	-1.22	0.56
VEI3	-0.64	-0.57
VEI4	-1.37	0.70
VEI5	-1.07	-0.19
VEI6	-1.38	0.98
VEI7	-1.22	0.56
VSI1	-1.22	0.56
VSI2	-1.07	-0.19
VSI3	-0.78	-0.36
VSI4	-1.58	2.40
VSI5	-0.80	-1.04
VSI6	-2.02	4.58
VSI7	-1.69	1.63
VPE1	-1.55	1.50
VPE2	-1.27	0.76
VPE3	-1.52	1.12
VPE4	-1.27	0.76
VPE5	-1.44	1.55
VPE6	-1.27	0.76
VPE7	-1.67	2.14
VCE1	-0.85	-0.52
VCE2	-0.97	-0.15
VCE3	-0.95	-0.38
VCE4	-1.57	2.84
VCE5	-0.97	-0.15
VCE6	-0.75	-0.99
VCE7	-1.52	3.03

3.7.2 Reliability of Instrument

Reliability refers to the extent to which a measurement instrument yields consistent and error-free results across repeated applications. It is a key indicator of internal consistency and stability when assessing latent constructs. As Hair, Sarstedt, Ringle, and Gudergan (2023) emphasise, reliability is typically evaluated using several approaches, including test-retest reliability, alternate-forms reliability, and internal

consistency. Among these, internal consistency is most commonly assessed using Cronbach's alpha (α), where a value of 0.70 or higher is generally considered acceptable for exploratory research. Composite reliability (CR) is also recommended as a more robust alternative, particularly in structural equation modelling, as it accounts for indicator loadings. These reliability metrics ensure that all items within a construct consistently measure the same underlying construct, thereby enhancing the instrument's credibility and the validity of the research's findings.

Construct reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. The results revealed Cronbach's Alpha value for Social Media Performance Expectancy ($\alpha = .97$), Social Media Effort Expectancy ($\alpha = .95$), Social Media Social Influence ($\alpha = .93$), Social Media Facilitating Condition ($\alpha = .94$), Social Media Hedonic Motivation ($\alpha = .96$), Social Media Habit ($\alpha = .91$) and Young Voters' Behavioural Intention ($\alpha = .95$) were found reliable. Similarly, Voting Issues and Policies ($\alpha = .96$), Voting Emotional Feelings ($\alpha = .91$), Voting Candidate Image ($\alpha = .92$), Voting Epistemic Issues ($\alpha = .967$), Voting Social Imagery ($\alpha = .77$), Voting Personal Events ($\alpha = .92$) and Voting Current Events ($\alpha = .91$) were also found reliable. Table 3.20 summarises the reliability results for the pilot research.

Table 3.20
Cronbach Alpha Value for Pilot Research

Construct	No. of Items	Alpha (α)
SMPE	7	0.97
SMEE	6	0.95
SMSI	7	0.93
SMFC	7	0.94
SMHM	7	0.96
SMH	7	0.91
YVBI	7	0.95
VIP	7	0.96
VEF	7	0.91
VCI	7	0.92
VEI	7	0.97
VSI	7	0.77
VPE	7	0.92
VCE	7	0.91

3.7.3 Validity of Instrument

A research instrument is considered valid when it accurately measures the concept it is intended to assess. The validity of an instrument represents a foundational aspect of measurement in research, determining whether a tool accurately captures the construct it purports to measure. Validity encompasses multiple dimensions, including content, construct, criterion, and face validity, each contributing to the overall credibility of measurement tools across disciplines such as education, health, and psychology.

Content validity plays a central role in instrument development by ensuring that the items comprehensively represent the construct under investigation. Astaneh et al. (2024) emphasise the utility of the Content Validity Index (CVI) for quantifying item relevance and coverage, thereby confirming that the instrument reflects essential dimensions of the construct. Muro-Culebras et al. (2021) reinforce this perspective by using the COSMIN framework, which prioritises relevance and comprehensiveness in item selection. Expert judgment, as outlined by Yuniarto et al. (2022), strengthens the validation process by enabling rigorous evaluation of item content by domain specialists.

Construct validity verifies the alignment between the instrument and the theoretical framework of the concept being measured. Brito et al. (2022) demonstrate that strong construct validity affirms the instrument's capacity to measure its intended attributes with precision.

Criterion validity assesses the degree to which an instrument correlates with established benchmarks or expected outcomes. Han et al. (2025) validate a scale measuring political competence among nurses through statistical analyses that confirm its alignment with relevant parameters. Psychometric indices, such as Cronbach's alpha, further substantiate the instrument's reliability and validity (Shalev et al., 2023). Peng et al. (2025) illustrate the integration of multiple validity types and highlight their collective influence on the instrument's credibility.

Reliability complements validity by evaluating the consistency of measurement across conditions. Nofrida et al. (2023) assert that an instrument achieves readiness for implementation when reliability metrics confirm its stability, particularly in educational contexts. Reliability assessments, including test-retest and internal consistency

measures such as Cronbach's alpha, establish temporal and structural dependability (Su et al., 2020).

3.8 Data Collection Procedure

The data collection method plays a significant role in this research. The research direction was determined, and measures were taken to ensure it would not compromise data quality. Essentially, researchers ensure strict adherence to this component to facilitate proper execution of the research procedure. The researcher collected the data for this study. The study involved participants aged 18 to 40 years, consistent with the operational definition of young voters in this research context.

The data collection process initially yielded 475 responses. Following preliminary screening, 64 responses were removed due to incomplete data, straight-lining patterns, and failure to meet the inclusion criteria of active social media usage for political information. This resulted in a final valid sample of 411 respondents, which was used for subsequent analysis. The final sample size exceeds the minimum requirement for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), which is considered suitable for complex models with multiple constructs and indicators (Hair et al., 2021).

3.9 Data Analysis Procedure

The data analysis procedure in this research was guided by a systematic approach to examining the relationships between latent constructs derived from the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) (Venkatesh et al., 2012) and the Model of Primary Voter Behaviour (Newman & Sheth, 1985). Given the research's objective to develop and validate a predictive model of young voters' political behaviour based on their social media use, structural equation modelling (SEM) using partial least squares (PLS-SEM) was employed. PLS-SEM is particularly suited for exploratory models, theory development, and studies with complex frameworks involving multiple constructs and mediation effects (Hair et al., 2022; Sarstedt et al., 2022). The data analysis procedure utilising SmartPLS (Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling) provides a rigorous framework for evaluating complex relationships among latent constructs. SmartPLS enables the simultaneous

assessment of measurement and structural models, offering robust capabilities for handling non-normally distributed data and small sample sizes, which are common in exploratory research. Maulani and Imronudin (2023) emphasise the necessity of thoroughly evaluating both the outer (measurement) and inner (structural) models, incorporating validity and reliability tests to ensure construct precision and consistency. Chen et al. (2020) demonstrated the use of bootstrapping procedures to estimate path coefficients and assess statistical significance, thereby confirming the hypothesised relationships.

Measurement model validation involved assessing convergent validity, discriminant validity, and internal consistency reliability. These criteria established the instrument's credibility and confirmed that latent variables accurately represent theoretical constructs. Wisnalmawati et al. (2023) underscore the importance of these evaluations in their SEM analysis, reinforcing the methodological integrity of construct measurement. Upon validating the measurement model, the structural model was examined to determine the significance of path relationships and the model's explanatory power. Suryani et al. (2021) illustrate how SmartPLS facilitates the evaluation of structural models, enabling a nuanced understanding of causal pathways between constructs. Mediation and moderation analyses further enrich the interpretive framework by identifying indirect and conditional effects, as demonstrated by Sari et al. (2023) in their multivariable analysis.

SmartPLS enhances analytical depth by resolving limitations inherent in earlier-generation SEM tools and accommodating complex relational dynamics. Abideen et al. (2023) highlight its efficiency and flexibility in uncovering latent interdependencies, thereby advancing empirical rigour. The integration of SmartPLS into instrument validation procedures strengthens the theoretical alignment and empirical robustness of the research model, affirming its relevance in contemporary methodological applications. Recent literature underscores its methodological flexibility and predictive power, especially in structural equation modelling contexts (Purwanto & Sudargini, 2021; Sarstedt et al., 2021, 2022). As such, PLS remains a highly active and evolving field, offering researchers a powerful tool for modelling latent constructs and complex causal relationships.

Various types of research can be conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). These are exploratory and explanatory. Exploratory research is conducted when there are unclear difficulties or insufficient

information to determine conceptual distinctions or the relationship between two variables. Exploratory research can generate hypotheses from qualitative data, but a quantitative method is required to test them. Explanatory research aimed to understand the reasons for variations in diverse situations, to evaluate the underlying ideas, and to establish connections between concepts to generate new theories. Explanatory research primarily focuses on the specific subject under investigation as the dependent variable. PLS-SEM is suitable for both sorts of research. Exploratory research can generate valuable ideas for testing with PLS-SEM, whereas explanatory research conducted post-PLS-SEM offers in-depth insights into implementing an intervention (Fauzi, 2022).

Descriptive statistics were employed to determine the mean values of the variables in the conceptual model, including respondents' demographics, social media usage, and prior social media interactions. Ultimately, measures of dispersion, such as the standard deviation, were employed to quantify the extent of data dispersion. The unprocessed poll data can be visually summarised using graphs and other graphical data representations. Given that the survey relied on self-reporting, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was employed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the interrelationships among the variables under investigation. Implementing EFA may reduce the number of variables, allowing researchers to examine relationships more deeply and enhance our understanding of construct validity. Cronbach's Alpha was used to assess internal consistency in reliability testing. It generated reliability coefficients indicating the dependability of the items used to measure a given construct. Pearson Correlation Analysis and Multiple Linear Regression were employed to establish the relationships between the theoretical constructs of the research model.

The 21 hypotheses developed in this research are grounded in the integration of UTAUT2 and the Model of Primary Voter Behaviour. In order to enhance clarity, the hypotheses are organised into four main groups based on their theoretical roles within the conceptual framework:

- Direct effects (H1–H9): Examine the influence of social media acceptance constructs on behavioural intention and voters' choice
- Mediation effects (H10–H15): Assess the mediating role of behavioural intention in linking technology acceptance constructs to voting behaviour

- Moderation effects (H16–H20): Evaluate the moderating role of experience on key relationships within the model
- Model evaluation (H21): Tests the overall explanatory and predictive power of the integrated model

This structured approach ensures that each hypothesis contributes to a specific aspect of the theoretical framework, supporting the study's objective of developing a comprehensive model of digital political participation. Table 3.21 presents a summary of the relationships among objectives, hypotheses, and statistical analysis approaches.

Table 3.21
Summary of Relationships between Objectives, Hypotheses and Statistical Analysis Approaches

Research Objectives	Research Hypotheses	Data Analysis Statistical Analysis
Objective 1 To examine the overall level of young voters' acceptance of social media for political participation.	NIL	Quantitative Partial Least Square
Objective 2 To analyse the influence of social media performance expectancy (SMPE), social media effort expectancy (SMEE), social media social influence (SMSI), social media facilitating conditions (SMFC), hedonic motivation (SMHM), and social media habit (SMH) towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) for political participation.	H1: Social media performance expectancy (SMPE) has a significant positive effect towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI). H2: Social media effort expectancy (SMEE) has a significant positive effect towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI). H3: Social media social influence (SMSI) has a significant positive effect towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI). H4: Social media facilitating conditions (SMFC) have a significant positive effect towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI). H5: Social media hedonic motivation (SMHM) has a significant positive effect towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI).	Quantitative Partial Least Square

H6: Social media habit (SMH) has a significant positive effect towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI).

Objective 3 To analyse the direct influence of social media facilitating conditions (SMFC) and social media habit (SMH) on voters' choice.	H7: Social media facilitating conditions (SMFC) has a significant positive effect towards voters' choice. H8: Social media habit (SMH) has a significant positive effect towards voters' choice.	Quantitative Partial Least Square
Objective 4 To analyse the mediating role of young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) between social media performance expectancy (SMPE), social media effort expectancy (SMEE), social media social influence (SMSI), social media facilitating conditions (SMFC), social media hedonic motivation (SMHM), and social media habit (SMH) and voters' choice.	H10: Young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) mediates the relationship between social media performance expectancy (SMPE) and voters' choice. H11: Young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) mediates the relationship between social media effort expectancy (SMEE) and voters' choice. H12: Young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) mediates the relationship between social media social influence (SMSI) and voters' choice. H13: Young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) mediates the relationship between social media facilitating conditions (SMFC) and voters' choice. H14: Young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) mediates the relationship between social media hedonic motivation (SMHM) and voters' choice. H15: Young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) mediates the relationship between social media habit (SMH) and voters' choice.	Quantitative Partial Least Square
Objective 5 To analyse whether social media political experience moderates the relationships between social media facilitating conditions (SMFC), social media hedonic motivation (SMHM) and social media habit (SMH) to young	H16: Experience will moderate the effect of social media facilitating conditions (SMFC) towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI). H17: Experience will moderate the effect of social media hedonic motivation (SMHM) towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI). H18: Experience will moderate the effect of social media habit (SMH) towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI). H19: Experience will moderate the effect of social	

voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) as well as from social media habit (SMH) and young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) to voters' choice.	media habit (SMH) on voters' choice. H20: Experience will moderate the effect of young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) on voters' choice.	
Objective 6 To analyse the influence of young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) on voters' choice.	H9: Young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) has significant effects towards voters' choice.	Quantitative Partial Least Square
Objective 7 To propose and validate an integrated model combining Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) and Newman & Sheth's Model of Primary Voter Behaviour for understanding young voters' electoral choices.	H21: The integrated Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) and Newman & Sheth's Model of Primary Voter Behaviour demonstrates explanatory and predictive power for voter choice.	Quantitative Partial Least Square

3.10 Summary

Chapter three discussed several aspects of the methodologies employed in this research. It reaffirms the research's objective, which is to examine young voters' behavioural intentions to use and accept social media for political participation and their impact on young voters' choices. The research questions, hypotheses, and research design were formally introduced. The discussion encompassed the target population and sample, as well as research-specific procedures, including participant selection and data collection. The chapter also discussed the model's construction and the procedures for conducting a comprehensive evaluation. During the discussion of data analysis, the focus remained on the procedures. The utilised instrument was presented, along with pertinent information on its validity and reliability, as documented in prior research. In conclusion, Chapter 3 also briefly discussed the importance of conducting a pilot study with samples of the population and the sample to be utilised to ensure the instrument's reliability.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research findings, derived from a comprehensive analysis of the collected data. Prior to conducting statistical analyses, it is essential to address several preliminary data issues that may affect the validity of the results. These include missing data, outliers, and the dataset's distributional properties. As Hair, Sarstedt, Ringle, and Gudergan (2023) emphasise, rigorous data screening is a critical step in ensuring the integrity of multivariate analysis, particularly when using structural equation modelling techniques. In this research, fundamental screening procedures were conducted using SPSS 29.0 to identify and address these issues. Fundamental screening was conducted using SPSS 29.0 (SPSS Inc., 2013) for all respondents in this research. A quantitative analysis methodology using stratified sampling was employed in this research to ensure representativeness across key subgroups. The unit of analysis in this research was young voters aged 18 to 40 who were registered voters in Selangor. A total of 475 questionnaires were completed during the data collection phase. Respondents participated via two primary modes: online and face-to-face. These dual methods of data collection were intended to ensure inclusivity, accessibility, and representativeness of the sample. Combining online and in-person approaches remains a widely endorsed strategy in contemporary survey research to improve response rates and reduce sampling bias, especially in studies involving heterogeneous populations. As Holtom et al. (2022) emphasise, multimodal data collection enhances participation by accommodating diverse respondent preferences and access levels, thereby improving representativeness and data quality.

The main aim of this research is to examine how young Malaysian voters' acceptance of social media influences their behavioural intention to engage in political participation and how this intention subsequently shapes their voting choices. In order to achieve this aim, the research integrates the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) (Venkatesh et al., 2012) with the Model of Primary Voter Behaviour (Newman & Sheth, 1985), thereby combining technological and motivational factors of digital engagement with the cognitive and affective heuristics of

voter decision-making. This integrated approach provides a holistic understanding of how social media use translates into electoral behaviour among Malaysian young voters. In line with this overarching aim, the research is guided by the following specific research questions:

- RQ1 : What is the level of young voters' acceptance of social media for political participation?
- RQ2 : How do social media performance expectancy (SMPE), effort expectancy (SMEE), social influence (SMSI), facilitating conditions (SMFC), hedonic motivation (SMHM), and habit (SMH) influence young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) to use social media for political participation?
- RQ3 : Do social media facilitating conditions (SMFC) and social media habit (SMH) have a direct influence voters' choice?
- RQ4 : Does young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) mediate the relationship between social media performance expectancy (SMPE), effort expectancy (SMEE), social influence (SMSI), facilitating conditions (SMFC), hedonic motivation (SMHM), and habit (SMH) and their electoral choice?
- RQ5 : Does social media political experience moderate the relationships between social media facilitating conditions (SMFC), social media hedonic motivation (SMHM) and social media habit (SMH) to young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) as well as from social media habit (SMH) and young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) to voters' choice?
- RQ6 : Does young voters' behavioural intention directly influence their voting choice?
- RQ7 : Does integrated model combining Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) and Newman & Sheth's Model of Primary Voter Behaviour demonstrate explanatory power for young voters' choice?

The data collected from the questionnaires are screened, collated and tabulated using diagrams. The cleaned dataset was then analysed and evaluated against the hypotheses.

4.2 Data Screening

Data screening for quantitative research in social sciences is a critical step in ensuring the integrity and reliability of collected data. In this research, two key data screening procedures were conducted using SPSS which are assessment and treatment of missing data, and identification of outliers. Missing data were examined to determine the extent and pattern of non-response, with decisions guided by best practices in handling incomplete cases such as listwise deletion or imputation techniques depending on the nature and proportion of missingness. Outliers were detected using both descriptive statistics and graphical methods ensuring that extreme values did not unduly influence the analysis or violate assumptions of normality and homogeneity.

4.2.1 Missing data

Upon initial examination of the dataset, some questionnaires exhibited missing data points which is a common challenge in survey-based research. If not addressed appropriately, missing data can lead to biased parameter estimates and diminished statistical power. According to Enders (2025), modern best practices recommend setting clear thresholds for acceptable levels of missingness. The initial dataset comprised 475 respondents. Prior to analysis, the dataset was screened for missing data. The variable parliamentary which identifies the respondent's voting constituency recorded 64 missing entries with the percentage of 13.5%. Cases with unknown or missing parliamentary constituency information were excluded to ensure consistency with the research's regional scope. As the unit of analysis in this research is limited to young voters in Selangor, these cases were removed to ensure the final dataset only included Selangor-based respondents. The final dataset comprised of 411 valid cases. This exceeds the minimum sample size requirement for PLS-SEM analysis. In order to ensure that this data cleaning step did not distort the sample's demographic composition, a comparison of key demographic variables before and after cleaning was conducted and is presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1
Comparison of key demographic variables before and after cleaning

Demographic Variable		Before Cleaning (N = 475)	After Cleaning (N = 411)
Gender	Male	47.60	51.60
	Female	52.40	48.40
Age Group	18-20	19.20	10.20
	21-23	31.60	33.60
	24-26	14.70	16.30
	27-29	7.40	8.50
	30-32	8.20	9.50
	33-35	5.50	6.30
	36-38	3.20	3.60
	39-40	10.30	11.90
Level of Education	SPM	5.10	2.70
	STPM	1.50	1.50
	Diploma	18.90	13.10
	Degree	64.60	71.30
	Master	9.50	10.90
	PhD	0.40	0.50
Race	Malay	65.68	60.30
	Chinese	23.37	27.00
	Indian	10.94	12.65
Monthly Income	Less than RM2, 500.00	50.90	44.50
	RM2, 500.00 – RM4, 849.00	21.70	24.80
	RM4,850.00 – RM10, 959.00	24.60	28.00
	More than RM10, 960.00	2.70	2.70
Registered Voter	Yes	93.30	98.30
	No	6.70	1.70
Did you vote in the last General Election?	Yes	85.70	93.90
	No	14.30	6.10
How often do you use social media for political information?	Never	5.90	6.1
	Less than 1 hour	42.10	39.9
	2 - 3 hours	31.20	32.4
	4- 5 hours	15.20	15.3
	6 hours and more	5.70	6.3
Your experience in using social media	Less than 2 years	39.60	36
	2 - 3 years	23.60	24.1

to search for political information.	4 - 5 years	16.00	17
	More than 5 years	20.80	22.9
State/Parliamentary	P092 – Sabak Bernam	Missing 13.5%	4.40
	P093 – Sungai Besar		1.20
	P094 – Hulu Selangor		2.20
	P095 – Tanjung Karang		4.10
	P096 – Kuala Selangor		2.20
	P097 – Selayang		5.10
	P098 – Gombak		6.80
	P099 – Ampang		4.60
	P100 – Pandan		1.90
	P101 – Hulu Langat		6.10
	P102 – Bangi		6.80
	P103 – Puchong		10.00
	P104 – Subang		7.50
	P105 – Petaling Jaya		5.80
	P106 – Damansara		1.90
	P107 – Sungai Buloh		7.10
	P108 – Shah Alam		10.00
	P109 – Kapar		1.50
	P110 – Klang		5.60
	P111 – Kota Raja		1.90
	P112 – Kuala Langat		1.00
	P113 – Sepang		2.20

4.2.2 Outlier Detection

During data screening, z-scores were computed to identify extreme cases across all measurement items. According to Hair et al. (2022), z-scores exceeding ± 3.0 are considered potential outliers. The analysis revealed one extreme value in the Effort Expectancy (SMEE) construct, with a z-score of -6.33 (respondent at row 76). This score is substantially beyond the recommended threshold, suggesting a potential outlier.

In order to assess whether this case was due to a data entry error, the raw dataset was re-examined. The response was found to be genuine, indicating that the extreme value reflected the participant's actual perception rather than a clerical mistake. As Kline (2023) notes, outliers may either represent measurement errors or legitimate

variations in respondent behaviour, and decisions regarding their treatment should be theoretically and methodologically justified.

Nevertheless, the potential influence of extreme values is acknowledged as a limitation of the research. By retaining this case, the analysis captures the full spectrum of young voters' responses, including those who express extreme levels of disagreement with the construct. Such variation may, in fact, highlight meaningful polarisation within the target population, which is consistent with prior findings on young voters' political attitudes (Gaudette et al., 2020).

4.2.3 Normality Assessment

Normality testing is an essential step in data analysis, as it ensures the appropriate use of statistical methods and the validity of the conclusions drawn from the data. Normality refers to how well the data conform to a normal distribution, an assumption underlying many parametric statistical techniques. Understanding the distributional properties of data is a critical step in quantitative research, particularly in the context of scale development, validation, and hypothesis testing. Skewness and kurtosis are two essential measures used to assess the normality of data distributions.

Assessing normality within datasets is essential to ensure the validity of statistical analyses, particularly in structural equation modelling (SEM). Skewness and kurtosis serve as primary indicators of distributional shape. Skewness reflects the degree of asymmetry in a dataset, where a value of zero indicates perfect symmetry. Positive skewness denotes a longer or heavier right tail, while negative skewness indicates a longer or heavier left tail. In SEM applications, skewness values below 2 are considered to maintain model validity (Lee et al., 2020), consistent with Rodríguez et al. (2020), who emphasise the importance of controlling skewness to uphold multivariate normality.

Kurtosis measures the tailedness of a distribution. A value near 3 corresponds to a mesokurtic (normal) distribution. Values above 3 indicate leptokurtic distributions with heavier tails, while values below 3 suggest platykurtic distributions with lighter tails. Kurtosis values exceeding 7 compromise the reliability of SEM procedures (Fukutake et al., 2020).

Acceptable ranges for skewness and kurtosis vary across methodological contexts. Skewness values between -2 and $+2$ are widely recognised as acceptable for

parametric testing (Annoni et al., 2021; Eckert et al., 2023). Kurtosis values are generally accepted to fall within the range of -7 to $+7$ (Rabinowitch et al., 2023), although some researchers advocate stricter thresholds below 3 to preserve the integrity of hypothesis testing (Almrafee, 2023). Values beyond ± 8 signal significant deviations from normality (Dandis et al., 2021).

Comprehensive guidelines suggest maintaining skewness within -2 to $+2$ or -3 to $+3$, and kurtosis within -2 to $+2$ for parametric analyses, extending to ± 10 in flexible modelling frameworks (Umeh et al., 2023; McLean et al., 2020). When these thresholds are exceeded, data transformation or the application of robust statistical techniques becomes necessary to mitigate the impact of non-normality (Şenyiğit & Serin, 2022). Thus, examining skewness and kurtosis not only provides insight into participants' response patterns but also ensures the robustness of subsequent analyses.

In this research, the acceptable ranges for data normality were adopted based on previous methodological guidelines, where skewness values between -2 and $+2$ are considered acceptable for parametric testing (Annoni et al., 2021; Eckert et al., 2023), and kurtosis values within the range of -7 to $+7$ are regarded as appropriate thresholds for assessing normality (Rabinowitch et al., 2023). Table 4.2 shows the skewness and kurtosis for the data.

Table 4.2
Skewness and Kurtosis

Items	N	Skewness	Kurtosis
SMPE1	411	-0.93	0.76
SMPE2	411	-0.50	-0.26
SMPE3	411	-0.81	1.09
SMPE4	411	-1.22	2.82
SMPE5	411	-1.08	2.27
SMPE6	411	-0.72	0.67
SMPE7	411	-1.12	2.48
SMEE1	411	-1.71	4.39
SMEE2	411	-1.49	2.52
SMEE3	411	-1.81	3.58
SMEE4	411	-1.45	1.34
SMEE5	411	-1.46	2.78
SMEE6	411	-0.64	0.31
SMSI1	411	-0.68	0.79

SMSI2	411	-0.61	0.55
SMSI3	411	-0.83	1.05
SMSI4	411	-0.49	0.87
SMSI5	411	-0.40	0.18
SMSI6	411	-1.08	2.08
SMSI7	411	-0.31	-0.03
SMFC1	411	-1.01	0.71
SMFC2	411	-0.75	-0.16
SMFC3	411	-1.00	0.87
SMFC4	411	-1.13	2.00
SMFC5	411	-1.30	2.05
SMFC6	411	-1.15	1.33
SMFC7	411	-0.52	0.18
SMHM1	411	-0.14	-0.02
SMHM2	411	-0.40	0.28
SMHM3	411	-0.66	0.81
SMHM4	411	0.04	-0.32
SMHM5	411	-0.75	1.17
SMHM6	411	-0.02	0.37
SMHM7	411	-0.66	1.01
SMH1	411	-1.42	2.00
SMH2	411	-0.42	-0.14
SMH3	411	-0.70	0.12
SMH4	411	-0.95	1.03
SMH5	411	-1.04	0.90
SMH6	411	-0.60	-0.26
SMH7	411	-1.36	2.60
YVBI1	411	-0.35	0.17
YVBI2	411	-0.15	-0.15
YVBI3	411	-0.26	0.17
YVBI4	411	-0.76	0.70
YVBI5	411	-0.45	0.51
YVBI6	411	-0.27	0.09
YVBI7	411	-0.57	0.41
VIP1	411	-1.42	1.73
VIP2	411	-1.22	1.34
VIP3	411	-1.18	1.20
VIP4	411	-1.54	2.76

VIP5	411	-1.38	1.92
VIP6	411	-1.45	2.50
VIP7	411	-1.65	3.50
VEF1	411	-1.14	2.04
VEF2	411	-0.74	0.69
VEF3	411	-0.19	-0.42
VEF4	411	-1.14	2.23
VEF5	411	-1.00	1.41
VEF6	411	-0.65	0.91
VEF7	411	-0.43	-0.14
VCI1	411	-1.45	2.70
VCI2	411	-1.36	2.31
VCI3	411	-1.50	3.32
VCI4	411	-0.52	-0.23
VCI5	411	-1.32	2.03
VCI6	411	-1.27	2.55
VCI7	411	-0.67	-0.40
VEI1	411	-1.09	0.49
VEI2	411	-1.35	1.47
VEI3	411	-1.34	0.88
VEI4	411	-0.59	-0.37
VEI5	411	-0.49	-0.33
VEI6	411	-0.74	-0.34
VEI7	411	-0.75	-0.28
VSI1	411	-0.96	0.01
VSI2	411	-1.22	0.94
VSI3	411	-0.61	-0.31
VSI4	411	-0.65	-0.07
VSI6	411	-1.16	1.38
VSI7	411	-1.28	1.87
VPE1	411	-1.61	2.04
VPE2	411	-1.82	3.68
VPE3	411	-1.75	3.76
VPE4	411	-1.66	3.30
VPE5	411	-1.16	0.65
VPE6	411	-1.55	2.72
VPE7	411	-1.39	1.57
VCE1	411	-1.07	0.70

VCE2	411	-1.79	4.29
VCE3	411	-1.64	3.18
VCE4	411	-0.78	-0.23
VCE5	411	-1.37	2.05
VCE6	411	-1.23	1.63
VCE7	411	-1.42	1.79

Assessing data normality is essential to ensure that items are suitable for subsequent statistical analysis and model estimation. In this research, the acceptable thresholds for skewness and kurtosis were based on established methodological guidelines, where skewness values between -2 and $+2$ are considered acceptable for parametric testing (Annoni et al., 2021; Eckert et al., 2023), while kurtosis values within -7 to $+7$ are generally regarded as appropriate for assessing normality (Rabinowitch et al., 2023). As shown in Table 4.2, most items recorded skewness and kurtosis values within these acceptable ranges, indicating that most data are approximately normally distributed.

However, several items, particularly those from the constructs Social Media Effort Expectancy (SMEE), Social Media Facilitating Conditions (SMFC), Social Media Habit (SMH), and Voter's Choice dimensions such as Issues and Policies, Candidate Image, Personal Events, Current Events, exhibited higher negative skewness (-1.3 to -1.8) and elevated kurtosis values (2.0 to 4.0). It suggests a slight clustering of responses toward agreement and mild leptokurtic tendencies. These patterns are common in self-report behavioural data where respondents tend to agree with positively framed items, particularly in studies of political participation (Hair et al., 2021). Despite the presence of these non-normal values, none exceeded the critical thresholds of ± 2 for skewness or ± 7 for kurtosis, indicating that the data do not exhibit severe departures from normality that would compromise the reliability of estimation.

Since Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was employed in this research, strict multivariate normality is not a prerequisite, as PLS-SEM is a variance-based technique that is robust to deviations from normality (Hair et al., 2022). Therefore, the data were deemed suitable for further analysis without requiring transformation. Overall, the results of the skewness and kurtosis analysis confirm that the dataset meets the assumptions required for parametric estimation and support the robustness of subsequent measurement and structural model assessments.

4.3 Reliability

Reliability in research reflects the consistency and stability of measurement instruments across time and conditions. Establishing reliability validates the integrity of the tools used to conclude quantitative data. Internal consistency, test-retest reliability, and inter-rater reliability represent core forms of reliability assessment. Internal consistency is commonly evaluated using Cronbach's alpha, with values above 0.70 indicating acceptable coherence among items measuring a construct. Skewness and kurtosis relate more directly to normality assessments than to internal consistency (Chen & Genton, 2020). Test-retest reliability assesses temporal stability using correlation coefficients, while inter-rater reliability evaluates consistency across observers, often quantified using Cohen's kappa. Values above .60 demonstrate satisfactory agreement, and calibration among raters enhances interpretive alignment (Orçan, 2020).

Reliability assessments must align with the research context. In order to assess the internal consistency of the measurement scales, Cronbach's Alpha (α) was calculated for each construct during the pilot test and subsequently re-evaluated in the post-test with the full dataset. Cronbach's alpha substantiates internal consistency across disciplines. Reliable instruments enhance the credibility of findings and ensure that conclusions rest on stable and coherent measurements. George and Mallery's (2018) interpretive framework classifies alpha values above 0.90 as excellent, 0.80 to 0.89 as good, 0.70 to 0.79 as acceptable, 0.60 to 0.69 as questionable, and below 0.60 as poor. Acceptable levels of Cronbach's alpha serve as a benchmark for assessing the validity and reliability of measurement instruments. These thresholds guide researchers in establishing internal consistency and reinforce methodological rigour across diverse research applications (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994; Hair et al., 2022). Table 4.3 presents the Cronbach's Alpha values for each construct.

Table 4.3
Cronbach's Alpha values for each construct

Constructs	Number of Items	Pilot Test Cronbach Alpha	Post-Test Cronbach Alpha
Social Media Performance Expectancy (SMPE)	7	0.97	0.90
Social Media Effort Expectancy (SMEE)	6	0.95	0.89

Social Media Social Influence (SMSI)	7	0.93	0.89
Social Media Facilitating Condition (SMFC)	7	0.94	0.90
Social Media Hedonic Motivation (SMHM)	7	0.96	0.92
Social Media Habit (SMH)	7	0.91	0.89
Young Voter Behavioural Intention (YVBI)	7	0.95	0.89
Voting Issues and Policies (VIP)	7	0.96	0.96
Voting Emotional Feelings (VEF)	7	0.91	0.90
Voting Candidate Image (VCI)	7	0.92	0.88
Voting Epistemic Issues (VEI)	7	0.97	0.86
Voting Social Imagery (VSI)	7	0.77	0.64
Voting Personal Events (VPE)	7	0.92	0.91
Voting Current Events (VCE)	7	0.91	0.88
Overall		0.98	0.87

The results of the reliability analysis show that almost all constructs demonstrated good to excellent internal consistency, with Cronbach's Alpha values ranging between 0.86 and 0.96 in the post-test phase. Constructs related to social media use, such as SMPE ($\alpha = 0.90$), SMEE ($\alpha = 0.89$), SMSI ($\alpha = 0.89$), SMFC ($\alpha = 0.90$), SMHM ($\alpha = 0.92$), SMH ($\alpha = 0.89$), and YVBI ($\alpha = 0.89$), all achieved strong reliability, confirming the stability of UTAUT2-based measures in this research. Similarly, the voter behaviour constructs drawn from Newman and Sheth's model such as VIP ($\alpha = 0.96$), VEF ($\alpha = 0.90$), VCI ($\alpha = 0.88$), VEI ($\alpha = 0.86$), VPE ($\alpha = 0.91$), and VCE ($\alpha =$

0.88) also recorded high levels of consistency, indicating that items within these domains reliably measured the intended concepts. However, the VSI construct ($\alpha = 0.64$) fell below the acceptable threshold, indicating weaker item alignment. This decline in reliability relative to the pilot test ($\alpha = 0.77$) may be explained by heterogeneous responses to sensitive items, such as religion and single-race politics, which often elicit diverse perspectives among young Malaysian voters.

The construct of Voting Social Imagery (VSI) initially recorded a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.64, which fell below the generally accepted threshold of 0.70 for internal consistency (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994; Hair et al., 2022). Inspection of the item statistics revealed that VSI5 ("I choose a party that represents a single race") contributed to the lower reliability, as it showed higher variability among responses ($SD = 1.34$) and weaker alignment with the other items. A closer examination of the item-total statistics revealed that Item VSI5 had a low corrected item-total correlation and contributed to the suppression of the construct's overall reliability. In order to improve the internal consistency of the VSI scale, Item VSI5 was removed, and the reliability analysis was conducted again. Following this adjustment, Cronbach's Alpha increased to 0.76, exceeding the minimum benchmark for reliability (Hair et al., 2022) and strengthening the internal consistency of the VSI construct. The decision to drop VSI5 is therefore both statistically and theoretically justified, as the retained items more reliably capture the broader concept of social imagery while avoiding distortion from a single outlier item. This revision was retained for further measurement and structural model analysis in SmartPLS. A summary of this reliability refinement is presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4
Reliability Cleanup (SPSS Cronbach's Alpha)

Construct	Version	Items Included	Cronbach's Alpha	Remarks
Voting Social Influence (VSI)	Before item removal	VSI1, VSI2, VSI3, VSI4, VSI5, VSI6, VSI7	0.64	Below the threshold of $\alpha = .70$
Voting Social Influence (VSI)	After item removal	VSI1, VSI2, VSI3, VSI4, VSI6, VSI7	0.76	Improved reliability; VSI5 removed

4.4 Descriptive Analysis

This section presents descriptive statistics for respondents' demographic characteristics and the main constructs used in the research, including means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages. These statistics allow for a preliminary interpretation of the data by identifying central tendencies and variability, and by assessing the distributional properties of each variable (Hair et al., 2022).

Descriptive analysis served as a foundational step in quantitative research by summarising and organising the dataset's characteristics in a clear, interpretable manner. It provides essential insights into the demographic profile of respondents and the distribution patterns of the research's variables, offering context for subsequent inferential and structural analyses (Gravetter & Forzano, 2021). In studies examining political behaviour, particularly those focusing on young voters' engagement and digital media use, descriptive statistics are crucial for understanding how socio-demographic factors such as age, education, gender, and social media usage patterns influence political attitudes and behaviours (Boulianne, 2022).

Moreover, descriptive analysis plays a critical role in ensuring data quality and readiness for more advanced statistical procedures, such as structural equation modelling (SEM). By systematically reporting descriptive findings, this research establishes the empirical groundwork for testing hypothesised relationships between technology acceptance factors and young voters' behavioural intentions and political choices. It serves as a critical foundation for understanding complex phenomena by identifying patterns, trends, and relationships within data.

4.4.1 Demographic Profile

A total of 411 respondents were gathered for this research. The sample consisted of young voters in Selangor aged 18 to 40. In this survey, 51.6% of the respondents were male, and 48.4% were female. Table 4.5 provides details on the gender distribution and the percentage of respondents.

Table 4.5
Gender Distribution

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	212	51.6
Female	199	48.4
Total	411	100

The age range for this research is 18 to 40 years old. The data shows the distribution of respondents across various age groups within a total population of 411. The largest age group is 21-23, comprising 33.6% of the total, with 138 respondents. This is followed by the 24-26 age group, representing 16.3% of the population, or 67 respondents. The 39-40 age group includes 49 respondents, accounting for 11.9% of the total. Smaller groups include ages 18-20 (10.2%, 42 respondents) and 30-32 (8.2%, 39 respondents). Age groups 27-29 and 33-35 account for 8.5% and 6.3%, respectively, with 35 and 26 respondents. The least-represented age group is 36-38, with only 15 respondents (3.6% of the total). Overall, the data suggests a younger population, with a concentration in the 21-23 age group. Table 4.6 shows the age of respondents collected for this research.

Table 4.6
Age of Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percent
18-20	42	10.2
21-23	138	33.6
24-26	67	16.3
27-29	35	8.5
30-32	39	9.5
33-35	26	6.3
36-38	15	3.6
39-40	49	11.9
Total	411	100

In terms of race distribution, Malays constitute the majority, with 248 respondents (60.3% of the total). This is followed by the Chinese, who make up 27% (111 respondents), and the Indians, who account for 12.65% (52 respondents). The distribution shows a clear predominance of Malays in this dataset, with Chinese and

Indians forming notable minority groups. Table 4.7 illustrates the racial composition of a sample population of 411 respondents.

Table 4.7
Race Distribution

Race	Frequency	Percent
Malay	248	60.3
Chinese	111	27
Indian	52	12.65
Total	411	100

Education level was one of the questions asked in the survey. Most respondents in this research hold a degree, at 71.3% (293 respondents). This is followed by diploma holders, 13.1% (54 respondents), and those with a master's degree, constituting 10.9% (45 respondents). A smaller proportion of the sample completed SPM (Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia), representing 2.7% (11 respondents), while those with STPM (Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia) account for 1.5% (6 respondents). The least represented categories are respondents with a PhD, making up only 0.5% (2 respondents).

This distribution highlights that the sample predominantly comprises respondents with higher education qualifications, particularly at the degree and diploma levels. In contrast, lower levels of education (SPM and STPM) and advanced education (PhD) are less common. The data suggests a highly educated population, with a notable skew toward undergraduate qualifications. Table 4.8 presents the educational attainment of a sample population of 411 respondents.

Table 4.8
Education Distribution

Education	Frequency	Percent
SPM	11	2.7
STPM	6	1.5
Diploma	54	13.1
Degree	293	71.3
Master	45	10.9
PhD	2	0.5
Total	411	100

The questionnaire explores the monthly income of the respondents. Half of the sample accounting to 44.5% (183 respondents) falls into the lowest income bracket which earns less than RM2,500.00. The next largest group, 28% (115 respondents), earns between RM4,850.00 and RM10,959.00, followed by 24.8% (103 respondents) earning between RM2,500.00 and RM4,849.00. A small minority, 2.7% (11 respondents), earns more than RM10,960.00, representing the highest income bracket. Table 4.9 represents the income distribution of a sample population of 411 respondents.

Table 4.9
Income Distribution

Income	Frequency	Percent
Less than RM2, 500.00	183	44.5
RM2, 500.00 – RM4, 849.00	102	24.8
RM4,850.00 – RM10, 959.00	115	28
More than RM10, 960.00	11	2.7
Total	411	100

Table 4.10 illustrates the voter registration status of a sample population of 411 respondents. A vast majority, 98.3% (404 respondents), are registered voters, while a small minority, 1.7% (7 respondents), are not registered. This indicates a high level of voter registration among the sample, suggesting that most respondents have taken the necessary steps to participate in the electoral process. Overall, the data reflects a strong foundation for electoral engagement in the sample.

Table 4.10
Registered Voter

Voter	Frequency	Percent
Yes	404	98.3
No	7	1.7
Total	411	100

Table 4.11 examines voting behaviour in the previous election among a sample of 411 respondents. A majority, 93.9% (386 respondents), reported that they voted in the previous election, indicating high electoral participation within the sample. In

contrast, 6.1% (25 respondents) did not vote, representing a smaller but notable proportion of non-participants.

Table 4.11
Voted in the Previous Election

Voted	Frequency	Percent
Yes	386	93.9
No	25	6.1
Total	411	100

Table 4.12 outlines the frequency of social media use for political participation among a sample of 411 respondents. The largest group, 39.9% (164 respondents), uses social media for political purposes for less than 1 hour daily. This is followed by 32.4% (133 respondents) who use it for 2–3 hours per day, and 15.3% (63 respondents) who use it for 4–5 hours per day. A small proportion of the sample falls at the extremes, with 6.3% (26 respondents) using it for 6 hours or more daily and 6.1% (25 respondents) reporting they never use social media for political participation.

Table 4.12
Frequency of using social media

Frequency of using social media	Frequency	Percent
Never	25	6.1
Less than 1 hour	164	39.9
2 – 3 hours	133	32.4
4 – 5 hours	63	15.3
6 hours and more	26	6.3
Total	411	100

Table 4.13 reveals the distribution of respondents' experience using social media for political participation, showing a relatively high concentration of respondents with less than 2 years of experience (36%). This suggests that a significant portion of the population is relatively new to social media platforms. A smaller group (24.1%) has 2 to 3 years of experience, while 17% fall within the 4 to 5 years category. Interestingly, 22.9% of respondents have been using social media for more than 5 years, indicating a relatively balanced distribution of users with limited and more extensive experience. The total number of respondents is 411, highlighting a diverse range of experience

levels in social media usage. This distribution could imply that social media platforms attract a younger or newer demographic, though a sizable portion still has long-term experience.

Table 4.13
Experience in using social media

Experience in using social media	Frequency	Percent
Less than 2 years	148	36
2 – 3 years	99	24.1
4 – 5 years	70	17
More than 5 years	94	22.9
Total	411	100

4.5 Level of Young Voters’ Social Media Acceptance and Intention towards social media for political participation.

The aim of this research is to examine how young voters’ acceptance of social media influences their behavioural intention to engage politically and, subsequently, how this intention influences their voting choices. The analysis includes several constructs related to technology acceptance, behavioural intention, and voting-related factors. In order to answer Research Question 1 (RQ1), the level of young voters’ acceptance of social media for political participation, descriptive statistics were calculated for six constructs of social media acceptance, one construct measuring behavioural intention, and seven constructs capturing voting choice considerations. All variables were measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).

4.5.1 Social Media Acceptance Constructs

UTAUT2-based constructs measuring social media acceptance. These constructs include performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, facilitating conditions, hedonic motivation, and habit, each assessed on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The findings show that young voters demonstrate a generally high level of acceptance of social media for political participation, with mean values ranging from 3.66 to 4.55. The highest level of

acceptance is observed in Social Media Effort Expectancy (SMEE, $M = 4.55$, $SD = 0.49$), indicating that respondents overwhelmingly perceive social media as easy to use and requiring little effort to learn. This is followed by Social Media Performance Expectancy (SMPE, $M = 4.26$, $SD = 0.58$) and Facilitating Conditions (SMFC, $M = 4.22$, $SD = 0.64$), suggesting that young voters regard social media as effective for political participation and believe they have the necessary resources and knowledge to use it. Habit (SMH, $M = 4.15$, $SD = 0.66$) also scored highly, reflecting the integration of social media into daily routines. By contrast, Social Influence (SMSI, $M = 3.77$, $SD = 0.66$) and Hedonic Motivation (SMHM, $M = 3.66$, $SD = 0.71$) were comparatively lower, though still above the midpoint. Table 4.14 presents the mean and standard deviation for each construct.

Table 4.14
Level of young voters' social media acceptance

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation
Social Media Performance Expectancy (SMPE)	4.26	0.58
Social Media Effort Expectancy (SMEE)	4.55	0.49
Social Media Social Influence (SMSI)	3.77	0.66
Social Media Facilitating Condition (SMFC)	4.22	0.64
Social Media Hedonic Motivation (SMHM)	3.66	0.71
Social Media Habit (SMH)	4.15	0.66
Overall	4.10	0.62

4.5.2 Young Voter's Behavioural Intention

The level of Young Voters' Behavioural Intention (YVBI) to use social media for political participation is moderately high ($M = 3.76$, $SD = 0.67$). This score, while positive, is slightly lower than the acceptance constructs, implying that acceptance does not necessarily translate into strong or consistent behavioural commitment. Table 4.15 presents the mean and standard deviation for the construct.

Table 4.15
Level of young voters' behavioural intention

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Young Voters' Behavioural Intention (YVBI)	3.76	0.67

4.5.3 Voting Choice Considerations

The results also shed light on the broader factors shaping young voters' electoral choices. The highest score is recorded for Voting Personal Events (VPE, $M = 4.51$, $SD = 0.59$), suggesting that personal integrity and scandals play a decisive role in shaping candidate support. This is followed closely by Voting Issues and Policies (VIP, $M = 4.42$, $SD = 0.71$) and Candidate Image (VCI, $M = 4.38$, $SD = 0.57$), reflecting the importance of issue-based concerns and ethical leadership qualities. Other constructs, including Voting Current Events (VCE, $M = 4.34$, $SD = 0.64$), Epistemic Issues (VEI, $M = 4.31$, $SD = 0.57$), and Social Imagery (VSI, $M = 4.27$, $SD = 0.56$), also scored highly, showing that uncertainty, contemporary events, and symbolic representation significantly shape young voters' political choices. Voting Emotional Feelings (VEF, $M = 4.04$, $SD = 0.66$) was the lowest, though still above the midpoint. Table 4.16 presents the mean and standard deviation for each construct.

Table 4.16
Level of voters' choice

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation
Voting Issues and Policies (VIP)	4.42	0.71
Voting Emotional Feelings (VEF)	4.04	0.66
Voting Candidate Image (VCI)	4.38	0.57
Voting Epistemic Issues (VEI)	4.31	0.57
Voting Social Imagery (VSI)	4.27	0.56
Voting Personal Events (VPE)	4.51	0.59
Voting Current Events (VCE)	4.34	0.64
Overall	4.32	0.61

All in all, the results indicate that young voters report high acceptance of social media for political participation, particularly because of its ease of use, effectiveness, and habitual integration into daily life. In terms of electoral choices, young voters prioritise personal integrity, policy issues, and candidate image, while also considering contextual and symbolic factors, with feelings playing a secondary role. These descriptive findings provide a clear overview of young voters' political behaviour in the digital era and lay the groundwork for the subsequent inferential analysis that will test the hypothesised relationships among social media acceptance, behavioural intention, and voting choice.

4.6 Descriptive Analysis of Each Item in a Construct

Descriptive analysis is a fundamental research approach that provides a detailed understanding of individual items within a construct, helping to uncover nuanced patterns and characteristics. This method emphasises summarising and presenting data to highlight its structure and underlying relationships (Reiling, 2022). Descriptive analysis facilitates an item-by-item breakdown, offering insights into the variance and distribution of responses (Wood, 2022; National Centre for Education Evaluation, 2017). Through focusing on each item, researchers can identify anomalies, ensure reliability, and refine measurement tools, ultimately contributing to the construct's conceptual clarity and operationalisation (Luna et al., 2018). This approach is invaluable in contexts where detailed scrutiny of components can inform theory-building and practical applications, such as in education, behavioural sciences, and communication studies.

4.6.1 Social Media Performance Expectancy (SMPE)

Table 4.17 shows the descriptive analysis for social media performance expectancy (SMPE). The highest mean score (4.38) is for SMPE7, which highlights that respondents strongly agree that social media allows citizens to quickly and easily obtain the information they need, with a low standard deviation (0.67), indicating consistent agreement. This underscores the role of social media as a highly effective tool for quick access to information in political contexts. Conversely, the lowest mean score (4.09) is for SMPE2, suggesting comparatively less confidence that using social media to gain political knowledge helps achieve important tasks, with a higher standard deviation (0.80) reflecting more diverse opinions.

Table 4.17

Descriptive Statistics for Social Media Performance Expectancy (SMPE)

Code	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
SMPE1	I find social media useful in my daily life to find more information on politics.	4.33	0.74
SMPE2	Using social media to gain knowledge on politics increases my chances of achieving tasks that are important to me.	4.09	0.80
SMPE3	Using social media to gain knowledge on politics helps me	4.18	0.75

	accomplish results more quickly.		
SMPE4	Using social media increases my knowledge of politics.	4.34	0.71
SMPE5	Using social media can help improve the quality of my existing knowledge of politics.	4.33	0.69
SMPE6	I will be able to complete my duties to vote more effectively if I use social media for information on politics.	4.14	0.75
SMPE7	Social media allows citizens to quickly and easily obtain the information they need.	4.38	0.67
Overall		4.26	0.73

4.6.2 Social Media Effort Expectancy (SMEE)

Table 4.18 presents descriptive statistics for six items measuring Social Media Effort Expectancy (SMEE). The items focus specifically on the perceived ease of using social media for general purposes and for political participation. Each item was rated on a 5-point Likert scale, and the means and standard deviations were used to interpret participants' perceptions.

Table 4.18
Descriptive Statistics for Social Media Effort Expectancy (SMEE)

Code	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
SMEE1	Learning how to use social media for is easy for me.	4.64	0.57
SMEE2	My interaction using social media is clear and understandable.	4.57	0.64
SMEE3	I find social media easy to use.	4.71	0.53
SMEE4	It is easy for me to become skilful at using social media.	4.60	0.64
SMEE5	I believe that I will have knowledge to access and use social media easily.	4.59	0.60
SMEE6	I expect the use of social media for political participation is clear and understandable.	4.22	0.72
Overall		4.56	0.62

The mean scores for all six SMEE items are notably high, ranging from 4.22 to 4.71, indicating that respondents generally perceive social media platforms as easy to learn, navigate, and use for political participation. The highest mean is observed in SMEE3 ($M = 4.71$, $SD = 0.53$), suggesting that the intuitive nature of social media interfaces resonates strongly with young voters.

The lowest mean, while still above 4.00, is recorded for SMEE6 ($M = 4.22$, $SD = 0.72$). This item's relatively low score and high standard deviation may reflect ambiguity or variability in how political content is communicated or interpreted on social media platforms.

The overall low standard deviations (ranging from 0.53 to 0.72) indicate a high level of consensus among respondents regarding the ease of using social media. This consistency is valuable, as it confirms that perceived ease of use is not only high but also stable across the sample.

4.6.3 Social Media Social Influence (SMSI)

Social Media Social Influence (SMSI) refers to the extent to which young voters perceive that significant others, such as friends, family, and peers, encourage or approve of their use of social media for political participation. In the context of the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2), social influence is a key predictor of behavioural intention, particularly in collectivist cultures where social norms and peer acceptance play a prominent role in shaping technology use (Venkatesh et al., 2012). Table 4.19 presents the descriptive statistics for each of the seven Social Media Social Influence (SMSI) items.

Table 4.19
Descriptive Statistics for Social Media Social Influence (SMSI)

Code	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
SMSI1	People who are important to me think that I should use social media for political participation.	3.62	0.92
SMSI2	People who influence my behaviour think that I should use social media for political participation.	3.66	0.88
SMSI3	People whose opinions I value prefer that I use social media for political participation.	3.74	0.86
SMSI4	People around me consider it appropriate to use social media for political participation.	3.84	0.76
SMSI5	In the view of those who impact my actions, social media can be used effectively for political participation.	3.93	0.77
SMSI6	Political discussions with friends contribute to increasing and deepening social relations with individuals.	4.03	0.82
SMSI7	I am motivated to engage in political activities on social media by	3.52	0.90

those who influence my life.

Overall	3.76	0.85
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The mean scores for SMSI items range from 3.52 to 4.03, indicating a moderate-to-moderately high level of perceived social influence among young voters regarding the use of social media for political participation. The highest mean score is reported for SMSI6 ($M = 4.03$, $SD = 0.82$), suggesting that peer-driven political dialogue is viewed as socially enriching. This implies that young voters are not merely passive consumers of political content but see value in interpersonal exchanges that strengthen social ties, an important insight aligned with the social capital and deliberative democracy literature (Boulianne, 2020).

In contrast, SMSI7 records the lowest mean score ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 0.90$), suggesting that external social pressure alone is not a strong motivator for political action. Notably, SMSI4 and SMSI5, which frame social media use as appropriate and effective in the eyes of others, record relatively higher means ($M = 3.84$ and $SD = 3.93$, respectively), reinforcing the notion that normative acceptance of social media for political discourse exists among peer networks. The consistency in standard deviations (ranging from 0.76 to 0.92) indicates a moderate spread in responses, with no extreme variability.

4.6.4 Social Media Facilitating Condition (SMFC)

The construct of Social Media Facilitating Conditions (SMFC) refers to the degree to which young voters believe that the technical and organisational infrastructure exists to support their use of social media for political participation. Rooted in the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) framework (Venkatesh et al., 2012), facilitating conditions are posited to directly influence both behavioural intention and actual technology use, particularly when users evaluate access to resources, knowledge, compatibility with other tools, and institutional support. Table 4.20 summarises the mean and standard deviation for each of the seven Social Media Facilitating Condition (SMFC) items.

Table 4.20

Descriptive Statistics for Social Media Facilitating Condition (SMFC)

Code	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
SMFC1	I have the resources necessary to use social media for political participation.	4.22	0.86
SMFC2	I have the knowledge necessary to use social media for political participation.	4.16	0.85
SMFC3	Social media is compatible with other technologies I use for political participation.	4.29	0.79
SMFC4	I can get help from others when I have difficulties using social media for political participation.	4.23	0.79
SMFC5	Social media work well with other platforms I use.	4.49	0.67
SMFC6	I have enough Internet experience to use social media for political participation.	4.36	0.77
SMFC7	There is no doubt about the government's support for the use of social media in political participation.	3.82	0.92
Overall		4.22	0.81

The mean values for SMFC items range from 3.82 to 4.49, indicating a high overall level of perceived enabling conditions among young voters for using social media for political participation. The highest mean score is recorded for SMFC5 ($M = 4.49$, $SD = 0.67$). It suggests that respondents perceive technical integration and cross-platform compatibility to be very satisfactory.

Similarly, items such as SMFC6 ($M = 4.36$, $SD = 0.77$) and SMFC3 ($M = 4.29$, $SD = 0.79$) further reinforce the notion that young voters possess both the technical proficiency and supportive digital ecosystems necessary for political use of social media. The relatively low standard deviations (ranging from 0.67 to 0.86) for most items indicate consistent responses, reflecting a shared perception of adequate infrastructure and digital literacy within the sample.

However, SMFC7 stands out with the lowest mean score ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 0.92$). This indicates greater uncertainty or variability in how young voters perceive institutional or governmental support for digital political participation.

4.6.5 Social Media Hedonic Motivation (SMHM)

Social Media Hedonic Motivation (SMHM) refers to the degree of pleasure, enjoyment, or emotional gratification that young voters experience when using social

media for political participation. Within the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) framework, hedonic motivation is a significant predictor of technology use, particularly for non-mandatory behaviours, such as civic engagement through digital platforms (Venkatesh et al., 2012). As political participation increasingly occurs within social and entertaining digital spaces, assessing hedonic aspects offers valuable insights into how emotionally rewarding these interactions are for young users. Table 4.21 below presents the mean and standard deviation for each of the seven Social Media Hedonic Motivation (SMHM) items.

Table 4.21
Descriptive Statistics for Social Media Hedonic Motivation (SMHM)

Code	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
SMHM1	Using social media for political participation is fun.	3.60	0.89
SMHM2	Using social media for political participation is enjoyable.	3.70	0.86
SMHM3	Using social media for political participation is very entertaining.	3.80	0.85
SMHM4	Using social media for political participation is very exciting.	3.49	0.95
SMHM5	Using social media for political participation is mentally stimulating for the brain.	3.89	0.80
SMHM6	Using social media for political participation is a rewarding experience.	3.46	0.82
SMHM7	Using social media for political participation is amusing.	3.70	0.85
Overall		3.66	0.86

The mean values for SMHM items range from 3.46 to 3.89, suggesting that young voters perceive a moderate to moderately high level of emotional gratification when engaging in political activities on social media. The highest mean is observed for SMHM5 ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 0.80$), indicating that respondents are likely to appreciate political participation not merely for its entertainment value, but for its intellectual engagement.

Other items with relatively high mean scores include SMHM3 ($M = 3.80$, $SD = 0.85$), while SMHM2 ($M = 3.70$, $SD = 0.86$) and SMHM7 ($M = 3.70$, $SD = 0.85$), suggesting that humour, infotainment, and meme-based content may play an important role in drawing young voters into political discourse online. The lowest mean scores are observed for SMHM6 ($M = 3.46$, $SD = 0.82$) and SMHM4 ($M = 3.49$, $SD = 0.95$), suggesting that emotional rewards may be felt less strongly than cognitive or social

rewards. Additionally, the slightly higher standard deviation for SMHM4 (0.95) suggests greater variability in how excitement is experienced across respondents, potentially influenced by differing levels of political interest, issue salience, or platform preference.

4.6.6 Social Media Habit (SMH)

Social Media Habit (SMH) measures the extent to which young voters' social media use has become automatic, routine, or compulsive. Within the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) framework, habit plays a critical role in shaping technology adoption and continued use, particularly in non-mandatory contexts such as political participation (Venkatesh et al., 2012). In political communication, the habitual use of digital platforms can strongly influence both exposure to political content and the likelihood of participation. Table 4.22 presents the descriptive statistics for the seven Social Media Habit (SMH) items.

Table 4.22
Descriptive Statistics for Social Media Habit (SMH)

Code	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
SMH1	The use of the social media has become a habit for me.	4.44	0.76
SMH2	I am addicted to using social media.	3.82	0.92
SMH3	I must use social media.	4.04	0.90
SMH4	Using social media has become natural to me.	4.35	0.71
SMH5	I often find myself using social media longer than intended.	4.26	0.82
SMH6	I often find life to be boring without social media.	3.87	1.00
SMH7	Time passes by without me feeling it when I am using social media.	4.30	0.80
Overall		4.15	0.85

The mean scores for SMH items range from 3.82 to 4.44, indicating that young voters generally exhibit high levels of habitual and sometimes compulsive social media use. The highest scores are observed for SMH1 ($M = 4.44$, $SD = 0.76$) and SMH4 ($M = 4.35$, $SD = 0.71$), confirming that social media use is deeply embedded in respondents' daily routines and perceived as second nature. Strong endorsement is also seen in SMH5 ($M = 4.26$) and SMH7 ($M = 4.30$, $SD = 0.80$), suggesting that young voters often lose track of time and engage in extended, perhaps unintended, usage. In

contrast, items reflecting more negative connotations of social media reliance, such as SMH2 ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 0.92$) and SMH6 ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 1.00$), record slightly lower means. These findings suggest that while young voters recognise habitual and immersive use, they may not universally view themselves as “addicted.” The relatively high standard deviation for SMH6 (1.00) indicates greater variability, suggesting that perceptions of dependency differ across respondents.

4.6.7 Young Voters’ Behavioural Intention (YVBI)

The construct of Young Voters’ Behavioural Intention (YVBI) reflects the extent to which young voters express their future willingness, commitment, and motivation to engage in political participation through social media. Within the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) framework, behavioural intention serves as the most immediate predictor of actual usage behaviour, linking attitudinal and motivational constructs to action (Venkatesh et al., 2012). Understanding this dimension provides insight into whether young voters’ acceptance of social media for political purposes translates into sustained participation. Table 4.23 presents the descriptive statistics for the seven Young Voter’s Behavioural Intention (YVBI) items.

Table 4.23
Descriptive Statistics for Young Voters’ Behavioural Intention (YVBI)

Code	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
YVBI1	I intend to continue using social media for political participation in the future.	3.88	0.79
YVBI2	I will always try to use social media for political participation in my daily life.	3.63	0.88
YVBI3	I plan to continue to use social media for political participation frequently.	3.63	0.87
YVBI4	I will use social media for political participation when I have a need.	4.16	0.77
YVBI5	I predict to use social media for political participation in a short time.	3.74	0.85
YVBI6	I like to interact with my candidate using social media.	3.58	0.91
YVBI7	I like to use social media for political participation.	3.73	0.92
Overall		3.76	0.86

The mean values for YVBI items range from 3.58 to 4.16, reflecting a moderate to moderately high level of behavioural intention among young voters to engage politically through social media. The highest mean score is observed for YVBI4 ($M = 4.16$, $SD = 0.77$), indicating that young voters are most likely to engage in political participation via social media when it is perceived as instrumentally relevant or contextually necessary. This suggests that intention may be situationally activated rather than constant.

On the other hand, YVBI6 ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 0.91$) has the lowest mean, suggesting that direct candidate engagement on social media is less appealing than general political interaction or information seeking. Items such as YVBI1 ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 0.79$), YVBI5 ($M = 3.74$, $SD = 0.85$) and YVBI7 ($M = 3.74$, $SD = 0.92$) reflect a steady, though not overwhelmingly strong, intention to sustain social media use for political purposes. Meanwhile, YVBI2 ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 0.88$) and YVBI3 ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 0.87$) suggest that using social media for political participation may not yet be fully integrated into daily routines, implying that while political participation online is present, it competes with other uses of social media, such as entertainment or social interaction.

The standard deviations, ranging from 0.77 to 0.92, indicate moderate variability in responses. This suggests that although most young voters express behavioural intention, the strength of intention differs, likely influenced by factors such as political interest, trust in institutions, or perceived efficacy of online participation.

4.6.8 Voting Issues and Policies (VIP)

The construct of Voting Issues and Policies (VIP) reflects the extent to which young voters prioritise substantive policy matters when evaluating candidates during elections. In Newman and Sheth's (1985) model of voter behaviour, "issues and policies" represent a rational, issue-oriented pathway that influences voter decision-making. In the Malaysian context, where socio-economic and governance issues are highly salient, this construct captures the extent to which young voters link candidate choice to a candidate's ability to address key national challenges. Table 4.24 presents the descriptive statistics for the seven Voting Issues and Policies (VIP) items.

Table 4.24
Descriptive Statistics for Voting Issues and Policies (VIP)

Code	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
VIP1	The candidate I will vote for will be the best person to create job opportunities.	4.43	0.80
VIP2	The candidate I will vote for will be the best person to resolve the tax (e.g., GST, SST) issues.	4.33	0.83
VIP3	The candidate I will vote for will be the best person to resolve issue of inflation.	4.38	0.78
VIP4	The candidate I will vote for will be the best person to fight corruption in the country.	4.44	0.78
VIP5	The candidate I will vote for will be the best person to stabilise the currency exchange rate.	4.39	0.82
VIP6	The candidate I will vote for will be the best person to reduce poverty.	4.42	0.78
VIP7	The candidate I will vote for will be the best person to provide quality education.	4.52	0.72
Overall		4.42	0.79

The mean values for the VIP items range from 4.33 to 4.52, indicating that young voters assign very high importance to policy issues when evaluating electoral choices. The highest score is recorded for VIP7 ($M = 4.52$, $SD = 0.72$), suggesting that education is perceived as the most critical policy area. Similarly, VIP4 ($M = 4.44$, $SD = 0.78$) and VIP1 ($M = 4.43$, $SD = 0.80$) also received high scores, highlighting strong voter expectations that candidates must demonstrate integrity and economic competence. These results underscore that corruption and unemployment remain pivotal electoral issues, resonating with longstanding public dissatisfaction with governance and institutional accountability. Moderately high means are observed for VIP2 ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 0.83$) and VIP5 ($M = 4.39$, $SD = 0.82$), both reflecting concerns over economic management and financial stability. The relatively low standard deviations (ranging from 0.72 to 0.83) indicate consensus among respondents, with most young voters strongly agreeing that issue-based policies are central to their decision-making.

4.6.9 Voting Emotional Feelings (VEF)

The construct of Voting Emotional Feelings (VEF) captures the affective dimension of voter decision-making, reflecting how young voters' emotions shape their attachment to candidates and their motivation to participate in elections. In Newman and Sheth's (1985) model of voter behaviour, emotions represent a non-rational but influential pathway that often interacts with policy evaluations and candidate image. Table 4.25 presents the descriptive statistics for the seven Voting Emotional Feelings (VEF) items.

Table 4.25
Descriptive Statistics for Voting Emotional Feelings (VEF)

Code	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
VEF1	Voting for my candidate would make me feel patriotic.	4.14	0.84
VEF2	Voting for my candidate would make me feel hopeful.	4.07	0.81
VEF3	Voting for my candidate would make me feel excited.	3.64	0.97
VEF4	Voting for my candidate would make me feel responsible.	4.32	0.73
VEF5	Voting for my candidate would make me feel involved.	4.27	0.76
VEF6	Voting for my candidate would make me feel optimistic.	3.95	0.81
VEF7	Voting for my candidate would make me feel satisfied.	3.87	0.89
Overall		4.04	0.83

The mean scores for VEF items range from 3.64 to 4.32, suggesting that young voters generally attach a moderately high emotional significance to voting for their preferred candidate. The highest mean score is found in VEF4 ($M = 4.32$, $SD = 0.73$) and VEF5 ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 0.76$). Positive emotions such as patriotism in VEF1 ($M = 4.14$, $SD = 0.84$) and hopefulness in VEF2 ($M = 4.07$, $SD = 0.81$) are also rated highly, suggesting that young voters link electoral participation to collective identity and aspirations for national progress. In contrast, VEF3 ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 0.97$) records the lowest score, indicating that voting is not necessarily associated with high-arousal emotions such as thrill or excitement. The relatively high standard deviation (0.97) suggests greater variability, with some respondents experiencing strong enthusiasm while others view voting as a more routine or solemn act. Similarly, VEF6 ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 0.81$) and VEF7 ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 0.89$) reflect moderately strong but not overwhelming emotional attachment, implying that political satisfaction and optimism

remain tentative among young voters, possibly due to persistent concerns about governance and institutional trust.

4.6.10 Voting Candidate Image (VCI)

The construct of Voting Candidate Image (VCI) captures young voters' evaluation of candidates' personal attributes, moral character, and leadership qualities. Within Newman and Sheth's (1985) model of voter behaviour, candidate image is a crucial factor that complements issue-based and emotional considerations in electoral decision-making. In contexts where political trust and integrity are highly scrutinised, candidate image often serves as a primary determinant of electoral preference. Table 4.26 presents the descriptive statistics for the seven VCI items.

Table 4.26
Descriptive Statistics for Voting Candidate Image (VCI)

Code	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
VCI1	I will choose a candidate that is honest.	4.55	0.64
VCI2	I will choose a candidate that is trustworthy.	4.56	0.62
VCI3	I will choose the candidate that is compassionate.	4.52	0.66
VCI4	I will choose a candidate that is religious.	3.88	1.01
VCI5	I will choose the candidate that is incorruptible.	4.49	0.68
VCI6	I will choose the candidate that has a good leadership skill.	4.54	0.61
VCI7	I will choose a local candidate.	4.14	0.90
Overall		4.38	0.75

The mean values for VCI items range from 3.88 to 4.56, indicating that young voters place very strong emphasis on candidate qualities, particularly those associated with integrity, trustworthiness, and leadership. The highest scores are observed for VCI2 ($M = 4.56$, $SD = 0.62$), VCI1 ($M = 4.55$, $SD = 0.64$), and VCI6 ($M = 4.54$, $SD = 0.61$). These results suggest that young voters prioritise ethical character and effective leadership above other attributes, reflecting strong expectations for clean governance and credible political representation.

Similarly, VCI3 ($M = 4.52$, $SD = 0.66$) and VCI5 ($M = 4.49$, $SD = 0.68$) also scored highly, reinforcing the finding that personal morality and empathy are valued alongside integrity. Moderate importance is assigned to VCI7 ($M = 4.14$, $SD = 0.90$)

and VCI4 ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 1.01$). While these attributes are not dismissed, they rank lower compared to integrity and leadership qualities. The relatively high standard deviation for VCI4 (1.01) suggests greater variability of opinion on the importance of religiosity in candidate selection, possibly reflecting generational or ideological differences among young voters.

4.6.11 Voting Epistemic Issues (VEI)

The construct of Voting Epistemic Issues (VEI) refers to voters' concerns about the uncertainty of future outcomes and governance performance after an election. Rooted in Newman and Sheth's (1985) model of voter behaviour, epistemic issues capture the dimension of uncertainty, risk, and knowledge-seeking, where voters evaluate potential consequences of political choices in terms of promises, welfare, and national progress. In the Malaysian context, where issues such as cost of living, healthcare, and education dominate public discourse, epistemic concerns are particularly salient among young voters. Table 4.27 presents the descriptive statistics for the seven Voting Epistemic Issues (VEI) items.

Table 4.27
Descriptive Statistics for Voting Epistemic Issues (VEI)

Code	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
VEI1	I am concerned about the future of the nation after the election in terms of citizen cost of living.	4.51	0.65
VEI2	I am concerned about the future of the nation after the election in terms of free education.	4.55	0.66
VEI3	I am concerned about the future of the nation after the election in terms of improving healthcare.	4.59	0.64
VEI4	I am concerned about the future of the nation after the election in terms of women empowerment.	4.09	0.88
VEI5	I feel worried if I do not get any incentive from the government (e.g: BSH) anymore.	3.79	1.02
VEI6	I feel worried if my candidate is unable to implement their promises according to their party's manifestos.	4.30	0.76
VEI7	I feel worried if my candidate is unable to fight for people's welfare.	4.38	0.70
Overall		4.32	0.77

The mean values for VEI items range from 3.79 to 4.59, reflecting a high level of concern among young voters regarding post-election outcomes and uncertainties. The highest mean score is reported for VEI3 ($M = 4.59$, $SD = 0.64$) and VEI2 ($M = 4.55$, $SD = 0.66$). These results highlight that healthcare and education are top priorities, underscoring young voters' demand for tangible improvements in essential public services. Similarly, VEI1 ($M = 4.51$, $SD = 0.65$) and VEI7 ($M = 4.38$, $SD = 0.70$) demonstrate that concerns about affordability and social protection remain central to voter expectations. Moderate concern is reflected in VEI6 ($M = 4.30$, $SD = 0.76$), indicating that voters are cautious about whether political pledges will translate into actual policies. This reveals a degree of scepticism toward political accountability, reinforcing the need for credibility and transparency in political communication.

VEI5 ($M = 3.79$, $SD = 1.02$) records the lowest mean, suggesting that while incentives such as BSH are valued, they are less central than structural issues like education, healthcare, and cost of living. The higher standard deviation (1.02) indicates greater variability among respondents, suggesting that some young voters are heavily reliant on such incentives while others place less emphasis on them.

4.6.12 Voting Social Imagery (VSI)

The construct of Voting Social Imagery (VSI) refers to the symbolic associations and social perceptions attached to candidates or political parties. Within Newman and Sheth's (1985) model of voter behaviour, social imagery reflects how voters' choices are influenced by the perceived social identity, values, and representational attributes of candidates or parties. In the Malaysian context, where multiculturalism, young voters' representation, and corruption-free governance remain politically salient, this construct provides insight into how young voters evaluate symbolic cues alongside policies and leadership qualities. Table 4.28 presents the descriptive statistics for six (6) VSI items.

Table 4.28
Descriptive Statistics for Voting Social Imagery (VSI)

Code	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
VSI1	I proudly choose a candidate that has professional background.	4.48	0.66
VSI2	I find it acceptable if my candidate comes from any religion.	4.12	1.07
VSI3	I feel irritated if my candidate is unable to associate himself with	4.21	0.78

young people.

VSI4	I feel bitter if the candidate displays his sophisticated lifestyle.	4.07	0.88
VSI6	I choose a party that represents a multiracial community.	4.20	0.90
VSI7	I do not choose a political party that practices abuse of power.	4.52	0.65
Overall		4.27	0.84

The mean values for VSI items range from 4.07 to 4.52, showing that young voters place a high level of importance on symbolic qualities in their electoral decisions. The highest score is recorded for VSI7 ($M = 4.52$, $SD = 0.65$) and VSI1 ($M = 4.48$, $SD = 0.66$). These results highlight that anti-corruption values and professionalism are central to how young voters form impressions of candidates and parties.

Moderately high scores are also observed for VSI3 ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 0.78$) and VSI6 ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 0.90$). This indicates that respondents expect candidates to be inclusive, relatable, and connected to the younger generation, and to support multicultural representation. The lower mean scores are found in VSI4 ($M = 4.07$, $SD = 0.88$) and VSI2 ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 1.07$). While still above the midpoint, these results suggest that personal lifestyle displays and religious background are less decisive factors compared to professionalism and anti-corruption stances. The higher standard deviation for VSI2 (1.07) indicates greater variability of opinion, reflecting diverse attitudes among young voters toward religion in politics.

4.6.13 Voting Personal Events (VPE)

The construct of Voting Personal Events (VPE) refers to the extent to which personal circumstances and private conduct of political candidates influence voters' choices. According to Newman and Sheth's (1985) model of voter behaviour, personal events represent a pathway where individual-level factors, such as scandals, health, or private life issues, may override policy or ideological considerations in shaping voter decisions. In Malaysia, where political scandals and candidate credibility often dominate public discourse, this construct is particularly relevant. Table 4.29 presents the descriptive statistics for the seven Voting Personal Events (VPE) items.

Table 4.29

Descriptive Statistics for Voting Personal Events (VPE)

Code	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
VPE1	I would change my vote if the candidate I supported committed a serious crime.	4.62	0.64
VPE2	I would change my vote if the candidate I supported lied about events in his / her private life.	4.52	0.76
VPE3	I would change my vote if the candidate I supported was involved in a business scandal.	4.57	0.68
VPE4	I would change my vote if the candidate I supported was involved in a political scandal.	4.54	0.70
VPE5	I would change my vote if the candidate I supported changed his / her stand on an issue.	4.38	0.82
VPE6	I would change my vote if the candidate I supported cheated on his tax returns.	4.50	0.73
VPE7	I would change my vote if the candidate I supported became too seriously ill to work effectively.	4.43	0.81
Overall		4.51	0.74

The mean values for VPE items range from 4.38 to 4.62, indicating that young voters assign very high importance to candidates' personal integrity and conduct when making electoral choices. The highest scores are observed for VPE1 ($M = 4.62$, $SD = 0.64$) and VPE3 ($M = 4.57$, $SD = 0.68$), indicating that criminal behaviour and unethical business involvement are viewed as critical deal-breakers.

Similarly, VPE4 ($M = 4.54$, $SD = 0.70$) and VPE2 ($M = 4.52$, $SD = 0.76$) highlight that voters are highly sensitive not only to professional misconduct but also to honesty and credibility in personal matters. These results suggest that moral integrity in both public and private life is considered essential for political legitimacy among young voters.

Moderately high scores are reported for VPE6 ($M = 4.50$, $SD = 0.73$) and VPE7 ($M = 4.43$, $SD = 0.81$), showing that voters would reconsider support if candidates are found to be dishonest in financial matters or incapable of serving effectively due to health conditions. While still significant, these factors are rated slightly lower than crimes and scandals, perhaps because they are seen as situational rather than outright moral failings.

The lowest score, though still high, is observed for VPE5 ($M = 4.38$, $SD = 0.82$). This suggests that while consistency in policy stance is valued, young voters may

perceive some flexibility or adaptation as acceptable, compared with more severe ethical breaches. The slightly higher standard deviations across VPE5 and VPE7 suggest greater variability of opinion, reflecting differences in how voters interpret shifts in policy positions or health limitations.

4.6.14 Voting Current Events (VCE)

The construct of Voting Current Events (VCE) captures the influence of contemporary political, economic, and social issues on voter decision-making. Within Newman and Sheth's (1985) model of voter behaviour, current events represent situational factors that shape voter choices in real time, often interacting with long-standing policy concerns and candidate evaluations. In Malaysia, where politics is highly event-driven, current issues such as scandals, taxation, foreign labour, and political stability frequently affect voting outcomes. Table 4.30 presents the descriptive statistics for the seven Voting Current Events (VCE) items.

Table 4.30
Descriptive Statistics for Voting Current Events (VCE)

Code	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
VCE1	The tax issue affected my vote.	4.28	0.85
VCE2	The political scandal affected my vote.	4.45	0.78
VCE3	The issue of misuse of power by politician affected my vote.	4.47	0.76
VCE4	The policies of the previous government had greatly improved the socioeconomic status of the people.	4.14	0.96
VCE5	Political stability affected my vote.	4.36	0.82
VCE6	I feel scared towards the country's sovereignty due to the influx of foreign workers.	4.40	0.75
VCE7	I feel nervous about the future of the country if there is a change in the government after the election.	4.27	0.95
Overall		4.34	0.84

The mean values for VCE items range from 4.14 to 4.47, reflecting a high level of sensitivity among young voters toward current political and socioeconomic developments. The highest mean scores are recorded for VCE3 ($M = 4.47$, $SD = 0.76$) and VCE2 ($M = 4.45$, $SD = 0.78$), indicating that corruption and abuse of power are decisive influences on electoral choices. High agreement is also observed for VCE6 (M

= 4.40, SD = 0.75) and VCE5 (M = 4.36, SD = 0.82), suggesting that young voters are equally concerned with issues of national security and governance continuity. These items reflect anxieties about external threats and internal instability, demonstrating that macro-level conditions significantly influence young voters' electoral behaviour.

Moderately high scores are found for VCE1 (M = 4.28, SD = 0.85) and VCE7 (M = 4.27, SD = 0.95). These indicate that while economic and transitional anxieties are present, they are slightly less dominant compared to scandals and sovereignty concerns. The lowest score is observed for VCE4 (M = 4.14, SD = 0.96), suggesting greater scepticism about the performance of prior administrations. The relatively high standard deviation here reflects divergent opinions, likely shaped by partisan alignment and differing experiences of policy outcomes.

4.7 Measurement Model Analysis

Measurement model assessment is a critical step in evaluating the psychometric properties of the reflective constructs in a structural equation model. In PLS-SEM, the measurement model focuses on examining the reliability and validity of the indicators used to measure latent variables. This includes evaluating individual item reliability using outer loadings, internal consistency reliability using Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability, and convergent validity using Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Establishing these properties is essential to ensure that the constructs are measured accurately before interpreting relationships in the structural model. The assessment follows the guidelines proposed by Hair et al. (2022), where outer loadings should be ≥ 0.708 , AVE should exceed 0.50, and both reliability coefficients should exceed 0.70.

This section begins with a pre-test phase to evaluate the performance of all measurement items using the full sample before finalising the measurement model. Indicators failing to meet the required thresholds are examined for potential deletion based on statistical and theoretical considerations.

4.7.1 Measurement Model Assessment (Pre-Test Phase)

In this research, a pretest on the measurement model was conducted before proceeding to the real analyses to have a vibe on the appropriateness of the data. The

result of the pretest will distinguish which indicators possess low factor loading that should be erased to fit the model. As recommended by Hair et al. (2022), an incentive for loadings shows an absence of focalized legitimacy and discriminant legitimacy because of low AVE. They also advocated that the expulsion of indicators will prompt an improvement of AVE, thus, further enhancing the evaluation of convergent and discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2022).

Figure 4.1 displays the initial measurement model generated using SmartPLS 4, comprising all latent constructs and their corresponding reflective indicators. Each item's outer loading is depicted, indicating its contribution to the underlying construct. As observed, while most items demonstrated acceptable outer loadings above 0.708, several items fell below the recommended threshold and were subsequently evaluated for deletion to enhance construct validity and reliability.

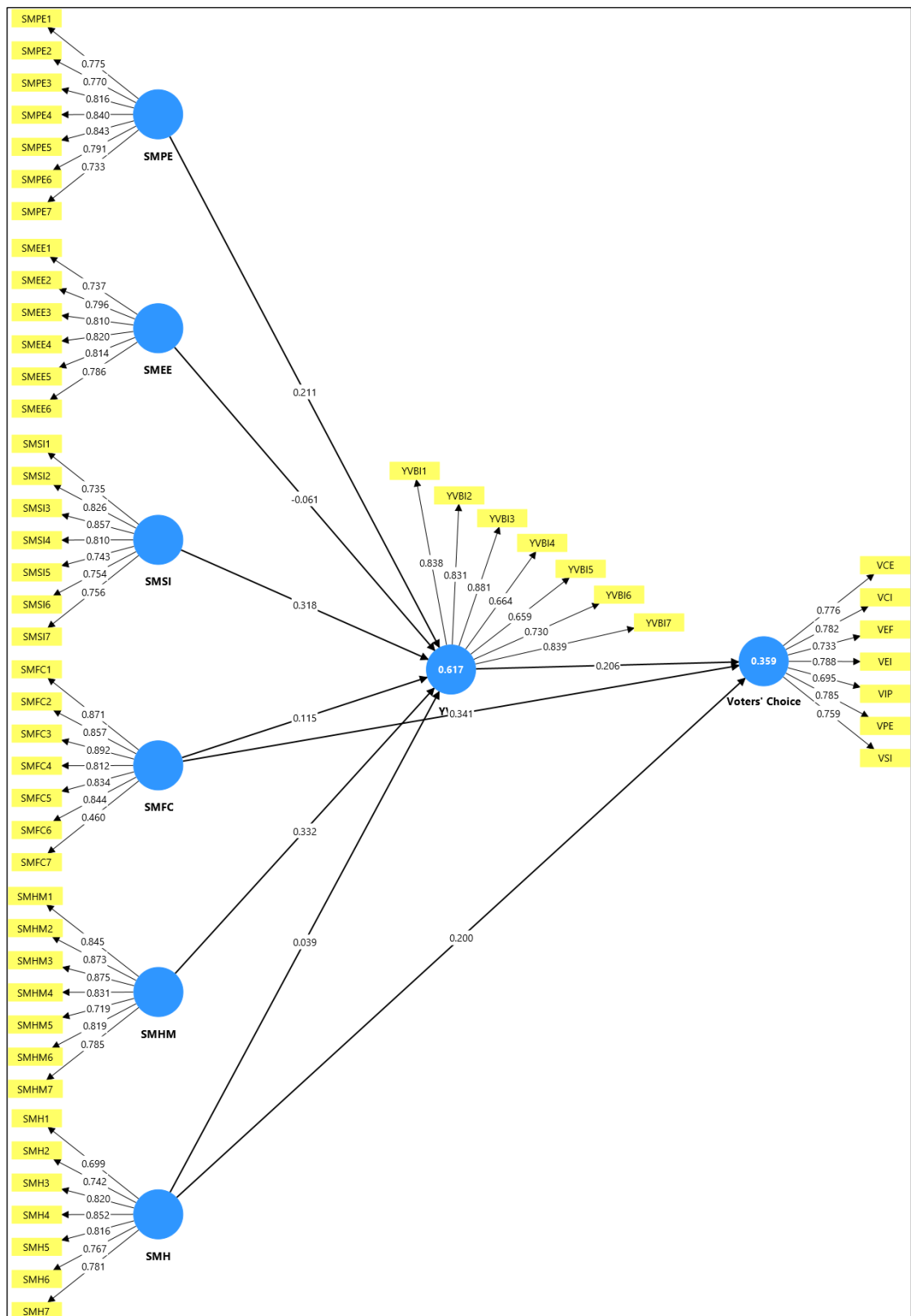


Figure 4.1 Pre-Test Measurement Model

4.7.1.1 Convergent Validity for Pre-Test Measurement Model

In this stage, convergent validity was evaluated by examining four key metrics: indicator outer loadings, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Cronbach's alpha (α), and Composite Reliability (CR). Table 4.31 presents convergent validity and reliability of the initial measurement model (pre-test phase). Items with loadings below 0.708 were considered for removal, particularly if their deletion improved AVE and construct reliability without undermining theoretical completeness.

Table 4.31

Convergent Validity and Reliability of Initial Measurement Model (Pre-Test Phase)

Construct		Loading	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)	Convergent Validity (AVE>0.5)
Social Media Performance Expectancy (SMPE)	SMPE1	0.78	0.90	0.92	0.63	YES
	SMPE2	0.77				
	SMPE3	0.82				
	SMPE4	0.84				
	SMPE5	0.84				
	SMPE6	0.79				
	SMPE7	0.73				
Social Media Effort Expectancy (SMEE)	SMEE1	0.74	0.89	0.91	0.63	YES
	SMEE2	0.80				
	SMEE3	0.81				
	SMEE4	0.82				
	SMEE5	0.81				
	SMEE6	0.79				
Social Media Social Influence (SMSI)	SMSI1	0.74	0.90	0.92	0.62	YES
	SMSI2	0.83				
	SMSI3	0.86				
	SMSI4	0.81				
	SMSI5	0.74				
	SMSI6	0.75				

	SMSI7	0.76				
Social Media Facilitating Conditions (SMFC)	SMFC1	0.87	0.90	0.93	0.65	YES
	SMFC2	0.86				
	SMFC3	0.89				
	SMFC4	0.81				
	SMFC5	0.83				
	SMFC6	0.84				
	SMFC7	0.46				
Social Media Hedonic Motivation (SMHM)	SMHM1	0.85	0.92	0.94	0.68	YES
	SMHM2	0.87				
	SMHM3	0.88				
	SMHM4	0.83				
	SMHM5	0.72				
	SMHM6	0.82				
	SMHM7	0.79				
Social Media Habit (SMH)	SMH1	0.70	0.90	0.92	0.62	YES
	SMH2	0.74				
	SMH3	0.82				
	SMH4	0.85				
	SMH5	0.82				
	SMH6	0.77				
	SMH7	0.78				
Voting Issues and Policies	VIP	0.70	0.88	0.91	0.58	YES

Voting Emotional Feelings	VEF	0.73					
Voting Candidate Image	VCI	0.78					
Voting Epistemic Issues	VEI	0.79					
Voting Social Imagery	VSI	0.76					
Voting Personal Events	VPE	0.79					
Voting Current Events	VCE	0.78					
Young Voter's Behavioural Intention	YVBI1	0.84	0.89	0.92	0.61	YES	
(YVBI)	YVBI2	0.83					
	YVBI3	0.88					
	YVBI4	0.66					
	YVBI5	0.66					
	YVBI6	0.73					
	YVBI7	0.84					

In order to assess the adequacy of the measurement model during the pre-test phase, convergent validity was evaluated using indicator outer loadings, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Composite Reliability (CR), and Cronbach's alpha for all reflective constructs. According to Hair et al. (2022), convergent validity is established when all item loadings exceed 0.708, AVE is greater than 0.50, and both CR and Cronbach's alpha surpass the threshold of 0.70. The results showed that all constructs met the required standards, with several exceptions warranting further consideration. All seven items in Social Media Performance Expectancy (SMPE) construct, recorded strong loadings between 0.73 and 0.84, with AVE at 0.63, and high reliability ($\alpha = 0.90$; CR = 0.92). Similarly, the Social Media Effort Expectancy (SMEE) construct demonstrated robust outer loadings ranging from 0.74 to 0.82, along with AVE = 0.63, $\alpha = 0.89$, and CR = 0.91. The Social Media Social Influence (SMSI) construct also indicated acceptable convergent validity with item loadings above 0.74, AVE = 0.62, $\alpha = 0.90$, and CR = 0.92. Six items in Social Media Facilitating Conditions (SMFC) construct displayed strong loadings (0.81–0.89). However, one item (SMFC7) had a substantially low loading of 0.46, indicating poor contribution to the construct. Although the overall AVE (0.65), α (0.90), and CR (0.93) were acceptable, SMFC7 was flagged for deletion due to its failure to meet the minimum loading threshold. The Social Media Hedonic Motivation (SMHM) construct demonstrated excellent convergent validity, with loadings ranging from 0.72 to 0.88, AVE = 0.68, $\alpha = 0.92$, and CR = 0.94. Likewise, the Social Media Habit (SMH) construct showed acceptable loadings between 0.70 and 0.85, with AVE = 0.62, $\alpha = 0.90$, and CR = 0.92. However, SMH1, with a borderline loading of 0.70, was earmarked for reevaluation in the subsequent analysis phase. Five items (YVBI1, YVBI2, YVBI3, YVBI6, YVBI7) in Young Voters' Behavioural Intention (YVBI), recorded strong loadings (0.73–0.88). Two items, YVBI4 and YVBI5, showed suboptimal loadings of 0.664 and 0.659, respectively. Despite maintaining adequate AVE (0.61), α (0.89), and CR (0.92), these two items were considered for removal to improve construct validity.

The Voters' Choice (VC) construct, adapted from Newman and Sheth's (1978) voter behaviour model, comprised seven sub-dimensions, each measured by a single item. All items demonstrated acceptable loadings ranging from 0.70 to 0.79. Notably, the item representing Voting Issues and Policies (VIP) recorded an outer loading of 0.70, which is marginally below the preferred threshold. Nonetheless, the overall AVE (0.58), Cronbach's alpha (0.88), and Composite Reliability (0.91) were above

acceptable cut-offs. Given the theoretical significance of VIP as a core domain within Newman and Sheth's model, and the risk of omitting an entire conceptual dimension, the item was retained despite its borderline statistical performance. This decision aligns with best practices in PLS-SEM, where conceptually essential items may be retained if they do not compromise the overall reliability and validity of the construct. Subsequent analyses used the refined measurement model after indicator deletion.

4.7.1.2 Items Removal and Retention Decisions (Pre-Test Phase)

Prior to the final measurement model assessment, a pre-test analysis was conducted in SmartPLS to examine the outer loadings of individual items and their impact on construct reliability and convergent validity. Guided by Hair et al. (2022), items with outer loadings below the recommended threshold of 0.708 were evaluated for potential deletion, particularly if doing so led to improvements in the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Cronbach's alpha (α), and Composite Reliability (CR). A total of four items were removed, while one item (VIP) was retained based on theoretical grounds.

Firstly, SMFC7 was removed due to its very low outer loading of 0.46. Its deletion led to a substantial improvement in AVE from 0.653 to 0.743, and to increases in both Cronbach's alpha (from 0.904 to 0.930) and CR (from 0.927 to 0.945). Similarly, YVBI5, with an outer loading of 0.659, was deleted as it resulted in a stronger AVE from 0.612 to 0.650 while maintaining acceptable reliability. Following this, YVBI4, which still fell slightly below the threshold with a loading of 0.696, was also deleted. Its removal further improved AVE from 0.696 to 0.721, and increased Cronbach's alpha and CR. SMH1, from the Social Media Habit construct, was also removed due to its borderline outer loading of 0.697. Although the changes in reliability were marginal, the improvement in AVE from 0.615 to 0.647 justified its deletion.

However, the item representing Value Image of Party (VIP) in the Voters' Choice construct was retained, despite its outer loading of 0.698 being slightly below the 0.708 threshold. While its removal would have increased the AVE from 0.578 to 0.608, it would also result in the complete exclusion of a theoretically significant construct from Newman and Sheth's (1978) model of voter behaviour. Given that the VIP item is the sole operational indicator of this domain and that all reliability values ($\alpha = 0.878$, CR = 0.906) remained well within acceptable limits, the item was retained.

to preserve the conceptual integrity of the integrated theoretical model. As Hair et al. (2022) stated, items with loadings between 0.60 and 0.70 may be retained if they represent theoretically important dimensions and if construct reliability and validity remain within acceptable limits. Thus, the decision to retain VIP aligns with best practices in PLS-SEM while safeguarding the framework's explanatory power. Table 4.32 presents the summary of item deletion and retention decisions in the pre-test phase.

Table 4.32

Summary of Item Deletion and Retention Decisions (Pre-Test Phase)

Item	Construct	Outer Loading	AVE (Before → After)	Cronbach's α (Before → After)	CR (Before → After)	Decision	Justification
SMFC7	SMFC	0.460	0.653 → 0.743	0.904 → 0.930	0.927 → 0.945	Deleted	Very low loading; major gain in AVE & CR
YVBI5	YVBI	0.659	0.612 → 0.650	0.892 → 0.889	0.916 → 0.917	Deleted	Below threshold; AVE improved.
YVBI4	YVBI	0.696	0.696 → 0.721	0.889 → 0.903	0.906 → 0.928	Deleted	Borderline loading; AVE & CR improved
SMH1	SMH	0.697	0.615 → 0.647	0.896 → 0.892	0.918 → 0.916	Deleted	Minor AVE gain; CR stable
VIP	VC	0.698	0.578 → 0.608	0.878 → 0.871	0.906 → 0.903	Retained	Protects Newman & Sheth's construct; theoretical priority

4.7.2 Final Measurement Model

Following the removal of underperforming indicators during the pre-test phase, the revised measurement model was re-estimated to assess the psychometric properties of the remaining items. This stage aimed to confirm that all constructs met the required thresholds for convergent validity, internal consistency reliability, discriminant validity, and multicollinearity, ensuring the model's readiness for structural evaluation and hypothesis testing. The assessment follows the criteria recommended by Hair et al. (2022), and the results are reported in the following sub-sections.

4.7.2.1 Measurement Model (After Pre-Test Adjustments)

Figure 4.2 displays the updated measurement model generated in SmartPLS 4 after removing low-loading items identified during the pre-test phase. This model reflects the finalised set of indicators retained for each construct and provides the outer loadings used to evaluate convergent validity. The visual representation provides an intuitive understanding of how well each indicator contributes to its respective latent variable and serves as the basis for subsequent reliability and validity assessments.

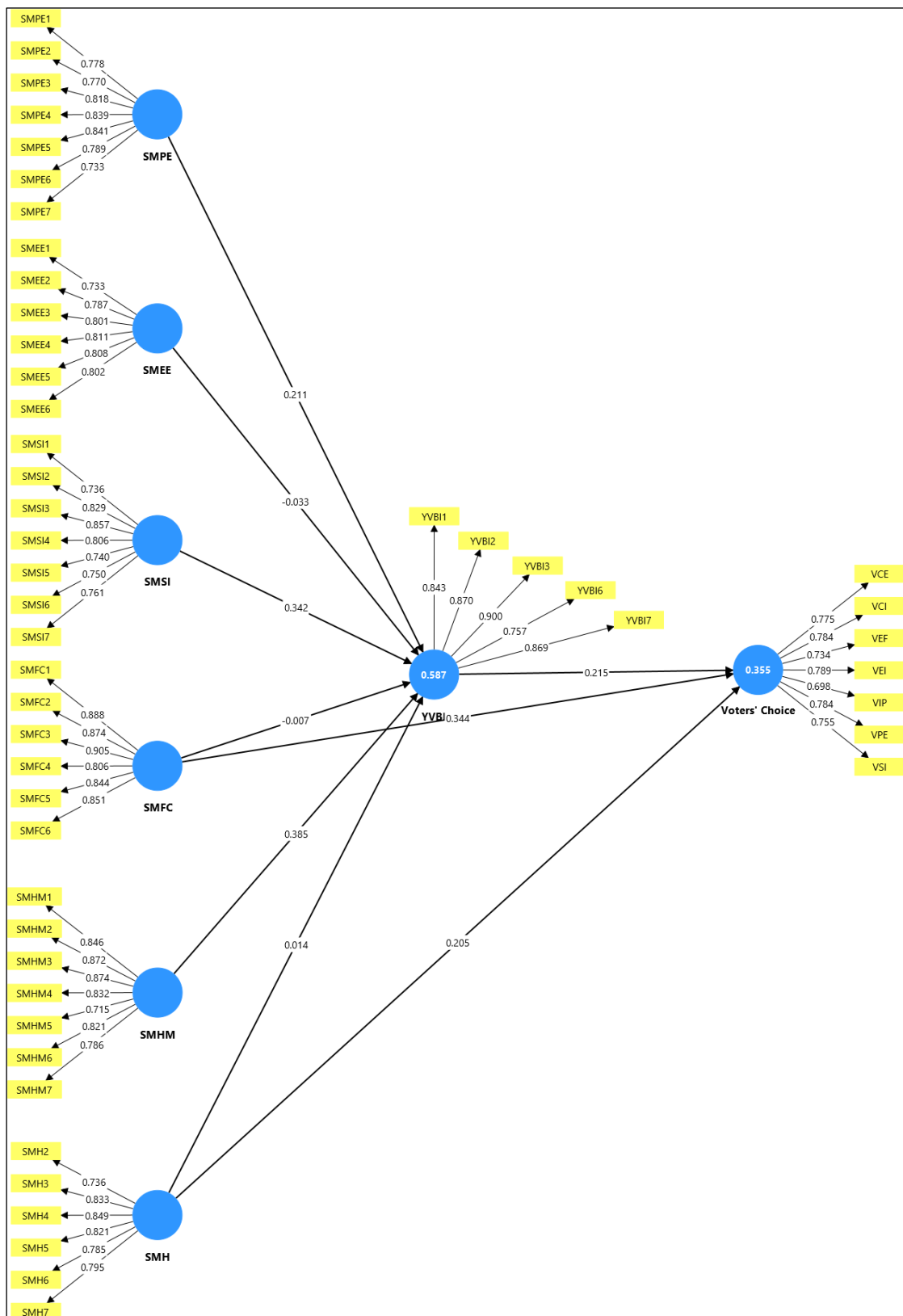


Figure 4.2 Final Measurement Model after Pre-Test Adjustments

4.7.2.2 Convergent Validity (Final Model)

Convergent validity refers to the extent to which items that are supposed to measure the same construct are related. In this final model, convergent validity was confirmed by ensuring that all outer loadings exceeded the threshold of 0.708 and that the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct exceeded 0.50. The results demonstrated that all remaining indicators performed well, with strong loadings and AVE values, thereby confirming the constructs' adequacy in measuring their respective latent dimensions.

In the context of this research, which integrates constructs from the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) and the Model of Primary Voter Behaviour (Newman & Sheth, 1985), ensuring the validity of measurement instruments is crucial for establishing the credibility of inferences drawn about young voters' political behaviour in Malaysia. Validity is a multifaceted concept typically assessed through construct validity, which includes convergent and discriminant validity, and, in some cases, criterion-related validity (Sarstedt et al., 2022). The analysis in this research assessed validity through convergent and discriminant validity, using Average Variance Extracted (AVE) as the primary metric for convergent validity. Table 4.33 shows the convergent validity and reliability of the final measurement model for this research.

Table 4.33

Convergent Validity and Reliability of Final Measurement Model

Construct	Items	Loading	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)	Convergent Validity (AVE>0.5)
Social Media Performance Expectancy (SMPE)	SMPE1	0.78	0.90	0.92	0.63	YES
	SMPE2	0.77				
	SMPE3	0.82				
	SMPE4	0.84				
	SMPE5	0.84				
	SMPE6	0.79				
	SMPE7	0.73				
Social Media Effort Expectancy (SMEE)	SMEE1	0.73	0.89	0.91	0.63	YES
	SMEE2	0.79				
	SMEE3	0.80				
	SMEE4	0.81				
	SMEE5	0.81				
	SMEE6	0.80				
Social Media Social Influence (SMSI)	SMSI1	0.74	0.90	0.92	0.62	YES
	SMSI2	0.83				
	SMSI3	0.86				
	SMSI4	0.81				
	SMSI5	0.74				
	SMSI6	0.75				

	SMSI7	0.76				
Social Media Facilitating Conditions (SMFC)	SMFC1	0.89	0.93	0.95	0.74	YES
	SMFC2	0.87				
	SMFC3	0.91				
	SMFC4	0.81				
	SMFC5	0.84				
	SMFC6	0.85				
Social Media Hedonic Motivation (SMHM)	SMHM1	0.85	0.92	0.94	0.68	YES
	SMHM2	0.87				
	SMHM3	0.87				
	SMHM4	0.83				
	SMHM5	0.72				
	SMHM6	0.82				
	SMHM7	0.79				
Social Media Habit (SMH)	SMH2	0.74	0.89	0.92	0.65	YES
	SMH3	0.83				
	SMH4	0.85				
	SMH5	0.82				
	SMH6	0.79				
	SMH7	0.80				
Voting Issues and Policies	VIP	0.70	0.88	0.91	0.58	YES
Voting Emotional Feelings	VEF	0.73				
Voting Candidate Image	VCI	0.78				

Voting Epistemic Issues	VEI	0.79				
Voting Social Imagery	VSI	0.76				
Voting Personal Events	VPE	0.78				
Voting Current Events	VCE	0.78				
Young Voter's Behavioural Intention (YVBI)	YVBI1	0.84	0.90	0.93	0.72	YES
	YVBI2	0.87				
	YVBI3	0.90				
	YVBI6	0.76				
	YVBI7	0.87				

In accordance with Hair et al. (2022), convergent validity is considered adequate when the outer loadings of indicators exceed 0.708, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) exceeds 0.50, and both Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) exceed 0.70. As shown in the table, all constructs meet these criteria.

The outer loadings for all retained items ranged from 0.72 to 0.91, indicating strong indicator reliability. AVE values for all constructs were above the 0.50 threshold, with the lowest being 0.58 for the Voters' Choice construct and the highest being 0.74 for Social Media Facilitating Conditions (SMFC). Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability scores were all above 0.88 and 0.91, respectively, confirming excellent internal consistency across constructs.

These results reflect the outcome of the earlier pre-test evaluation, where four items, SMFC7 (loading = 0.460), YVBI5 (0.659), YVBI4 (0.664), and SMH1 (0.697), were removed due to low outer loadings. Their deletion improved AVE values and had minimal impact on internal consistency, thereby strengthening the model's overall validity. Importantly, VIP (Voting Issues and Policies), which had a borderline loading of 0.70, was retained to preserve theoretical completeness, as it represents a core construct from Newman and Sheth's (1978) voter behaviour model.

In summary, the results confirm that the final measurement model satisfies the requirements for convergent validity and internal consistency, providing a strong foundation for the subsequent structural model assessment.

4.7.2.3 Internal Consistency Reliability

Internal consistency reliability assesses the extent to which the indicators within a construct consistently represent the same latent construct. In this research, internal consistency was assessed using two common reliability coefficients: Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability (CR). Both indices provide insight into the reliability of each construct, with values above 0.70 considered acceptable and values above 0.90 considered excellent (Hair et al., 2022).

As presented in Table 4.34, all constructs in the final measurement model demonstrated high internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.88 to 0.93, while Composite Reliability values ranged from 0.91 to 0.95. These results exceed the recommended thresholds and confirm that the items within each construct reliably measure the same underlying dimension. The consistently high CR values further

support the robustness of the constructs, indicating minimal measurement error and strong inter-item correlations.

These reliability outcomes, combined with the earlier assessment of convergent validity, confirm that the final measurement model is psychometrically sound and suitable for structural path analysis.

4.7.2.4 Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity assesses whether a construct is truly distinct from other constructs within the model. It ensures that the indicators of one construct do not excessively correlate with those of another, thereby confirming that each latent variable captures a unique dimension of the research framework. Two commonly used methods for evaluating discriminant validity are the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio.

Recent advancements in assessing discriminant validity include refining criteria such as the Fornell-Larcker Criterion, which compares each construct's average variance extracted (AVE) to the squared correlations (shared variances) with other constructs. If the AVE for a construct exceeds its shared variance, discriminant validity is supported. However, critiques of the Fornell-Larcker Criterion have led to the development of alternative methods, such as the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT), which is more effective in detecting issues with discriminant validity in variance-based structural equation modelling (Rönkkö & Cho, 2020).

The Fornell-Larcker criterion was applied to evaluate the discriminant validity of the constructs. According to this criterion, the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct (represented along the diagonal) should exceed its correlations with other constructs in the model (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The Fornell-Larcker criterion is a method for assessing discriminant validity in structural equation modelling (SEM). It ensures that constructs are distinct by comparing the square root of a construct's average variance extracted (AVE) with its correlations with other constructs. As Fornell and Larcker (1981) proposed, the square root of AVE is required to exceed inter-construct correlations, indicating that a construct shares more variance with its indicators than others. Despite its foundational role, the criterion has faced criticism for its sensitivity to validity concerns, with newer methods such as the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio offering more robust alternatives. However,

Fornell-Larcker remains widely applied in fields like political communication and consumer behaviour, often complemented by alternative checks to ensure methodological rigour (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The Fornell-Larcker criterion requires that the square root of a construct's AVE be greater than its highest correlation with any other construct. As shown in Table 4.34, the diagonal elements (square roots of AVEs) exceed the off-diagonal inter-construct correlations in all cases, indicating that each construct shares more variance with its indicators than with other constructs.

Table 4.34
Fornell-Larcker Criterion for Discrimination Validity

	SMEE	SMFC	SMH	SMHM	SMPE	SMSI	Voters' Choice	YVBI
SMEE	0.79							
SMFC	0.49	0.86						
SMH	0.47	0.37	0.80					
SMHM	0.26	0.49	0.23	0.82				
SMPE	0.51	0.57	0.34	0.44	0.80			
SMSI	0.38	0.60	0.33	0.56	0.53	0.78		
Voters' Choice	0.47	0.53	0.39	0.39	0.56	0.48	0.76	
YVBI	0.31	0.50	0.27	0.66	0.55	0.66	0.44	0.85

The results demonstrate that all constructs in the model satisfy the Fornell–Larcker Criterion. In each construct, the square root of its AVE (bold diagonal values) is greater than its highest correlation with any other construct. Social Media Effort Expectancy (SMEE) recorded a square root of AVE of 0.79, which is higher than its highest inter-construct correlation (0.51 with SMPE). Similarly, Young Voters' Behavioural Intention (YVBI) has an AVE square root of 0.85, which exceeds its highest correlation with SMSI (0.66).

The pattern is consistent across all constructs: Social Media Facilitating Conditions (0.86), Social Media Habit (0.80), Social Media Hedonic Motivation (0.82), Social Media Performance Expectancy (0.80), Social Media Social Influence (0.78), and Voters' Choice (0.76) each display diagonal values higher than their corresponding off-diagonal correlations. This indicates that each construct shares more variance with its own indicators than with those of other constructs in the model, thereby satisfying the requirement for discriminant validity.

These results confirm that the constructs used in this research are empirically distinct, which is essential for ensuring that the measurement model accurately captures separate theoretical concepts. Specifically, the findings indicate that while some constructs show moderate correlations, such as between YVBI and SMSI, $r = 0.66$, the square roots of their AVE remain higher, demonstrating that they are conceptually different. Establishing discriminant validity at this stage strengthens confidence in the measurement model, allowing the analysis to proceed to the structural model assessment with assurance that multicollinearity or construct redundancy are not undermining the results.

Discriminant validity was further assessed using the Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio of Correlations (HTMT), which is considered a more reliable method than the Fornell–Larcker criterion (Henseler et al., 2015). HTMT is considered a more robust and reliable method for detecting lack of discriminant validity, especially in variance-based structural equation modelling (Henseler et al., 2015). According to established thresholds, HTMT values should be below 0.85 for conceptually distinct constructs (Kline, 2011), or more leniently, below 0.90 (Gold et al., 2001; Hair et al., 2022). As presented in Table 4.35, all HTMT values fall below the stricter 0.85 threshold, confirming that the constructs are empirically distinct.

Table 4.35
HTMT Values for Discriminant Validity

	SMEE	SMFC	SMH	SMHM	SMPE	SMSI	Voters' Choice	YVBI
SMEE								
SMFC	0.53							
SMH	0.52	0.39						
SMHM	0.25	0.53	0.26					
SMPE	0.53	0.62	0.36	0.48				
SMSI	0.38	0.65	0.36	0.62	0.59			
Voters' Choice	0.52	0.58	0.42	0.43	0.62	0.54		
YVBI	0.28	0.53	0.29	0.73	0.60	0.73	0.49	

The HTMT results demonstrate that all values fall below the conservative threshold of 0.85, confirming that discriminant validity is established across the constructs. The highest HTMT values are observed between YVBI and SMSI (0.73)

and between YVBI and SMHM (0.73), suggesting moderate-to-strong associations. These findings are theoretically consistent, as both social influence and hedonic motivation often influence behavioural intention in the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) framework. Despite these stronger relationships, both remain comfortably below the threshold, indicating that the constructs remain empirically distinct.

Other inter-construct HTMT values are lower, ranging from 0.25 to 0.65, further reinforcing discriminant validity. In an instance, the HTMT ratios between SMHM and SMEE (0.25) and between SMH and SMHM (0.26) indicate relatively weak associations, suggesting that hedonic motivation is conceptually and empirically distinct from ease of use and habitual use. Similarly, the HTMT values for Voters' Choice with other constructs (0.42–0.62) suggest moderate but acceptable relationships, confirming that voters' choice is not redundant with social media acceptance or intention constructs.

Together with the Fornell–Larcker Criterion, the HTMT analysis confirms that the constructs in this research demonstrate discriminant validity, meaning they capture unique, non-overlapping theoretical concepts. This provides strong evidence that the measurement model is robust and suitable for testing the hypothesised relationships in the structural model. Importantly, the relatively higher HTMT values between YVBI–SMSI and YVBI–SMHM highlight areas where behavioural intention is closely linked to social and hedonic drivers, aligning with prior findings in technology adoption research (Venkatesh et al., 2012; Boulianne & Theocharis, 2020).

4.7.3 The Overall Measurement Model Evaluation

The primary objective of the measurement model assessment is to evaluate the relationships between indicators and constructs and to identify the correlations among constructs, ensuring that each construct in the research is distinct from the others.

In order to evaluate this method, three assessments were conducted, namely, i) the assessment of construct reliability, ii) the assessment of convergent validity and iii) the assessment of discriminant validity. All constructs met the minimum threshold criterion for assessing construct reliability (composite reliability > 0.71). Similarly, in the assessment of convergent validity, each construct met the minimum requirements of AVE > 0.5 and factor loadings > 0.708. Ultimately, the assessment of discriminant

validity using cross-loadings comparison, the Fornell and Larcker criterion, and the HTMT criterion shows that each construct in this research is distinct. After the total prerequisites have been satisfied and met the necessities of estimation model assessment, the following stage that should be taken is the assessment of the structural model.

The evaluation of the measurement model confirmed that the constructs employed in this research demonstrate satisfactory reliability and validity, thereby meeting the prerequisites for structural model assessment. Reliability analysis, as measured by Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), showed that all constructs exceeded the recommended thresholds, with Cronbach's Alpha values ranging from 0.78 to 0.96 and CR values surpassing the minimum criterion of 0.70, thereby confirming internal consistency (Hair et al., 2022; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Convergent validity was established, as all constructs had AVE values above the 0.50 cutoff, indicating that each latent construct explained more than half of the variance in its indicators. While the Voting Social Imagery (VSI) construct initially recorded a low Cronbach's Alpha due to the heterogeneity of responses to the item "I choose a party that represents a single race," the removal of this item improved reliability substantially ($\alpha = 0.78$), allowing the construct to be retained without compromising validity. Discriminant validity was assessed using both the Fornell–Larcker Criterion and the HTMT ratio, following best practice recommendations (Henseler et al., 2015; Hair et al., 2022). The Fornell–Larcker analysis revealed that the square roots of AVE for each construct were consistently greater than their correlations with other constructs, thereby confirming that each construct is more strongly related to its own indicators than to those of other constructs. Complementing this, the HTMT analysis showed that all inter-construct values were below the conservative threshold of 0.85, with the highest ratios observed between YVBI–SMSI (0.73) and YVBI–SMHM (0.73), which, while moderately strong, remained within acceptable limits and are theoretically consistent with the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) framework, where social and hedonic factors strongly influence behavioural intention. Together, these findings provide robust evidence that the measurement model is reliable, valid, and free from issues of redundancy or multicollinearity, thereby justifying its use in the subsequent structural model analysis to examine the hypothesised relationships among social media acceptance, behavioural intention, and voters' choice. Having established indicator

reliability and validity, the next section examines structural relationships among constructs

4.8 Assessment of Structural Model Analysis

This section presents the outcome of the structural model assessment. After the constructs in the measurement model have been shown to be reliable, convergent, and discriminant, the structural model must be assessed to evaluate the hypothesised correlations. According to Hair et al. (2022), the assessment of the structural model in PLS-SEM follows a systematic procedure that includes examining collinearity issues (VIF values), path coefficients, coefficient of determination (R^2), effect sizes (f^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), and model fit indices. This stage is critical because it determines the extent to which the empirical data support the proposed theoretical framework. In this research, the structural model was assessed to answer the research objectives by testing the influence of social media acceptance constructs (performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, facilitating conditions, hedonic motivation, and habit) on young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI), and subsequently, the effect of behavioural intention on voters' choice, which incorporates the dimensions of Newman and Sheth's model (voting issues and policies, emotional feelings, candidate image, epistemic issues, social imagery, personal events, and current events). Furthermore, the analysis also considered the moderating role of experience to explore whether the strength of these relationships varied across different levels of social media usage. The application of bootstrapping methodologies with 5,000 resamples estimated path robustness and significance. The robustness and significance of the structural relationships were estimated, providing the empirical basis for confirming or rejecting the proposed hypotheses.

This research follows Hair's (2014) five-step procedure for assessing a structural model. Figure 4.3 introduces the five-step structural model assessment procedure by Hair et al. (2014).

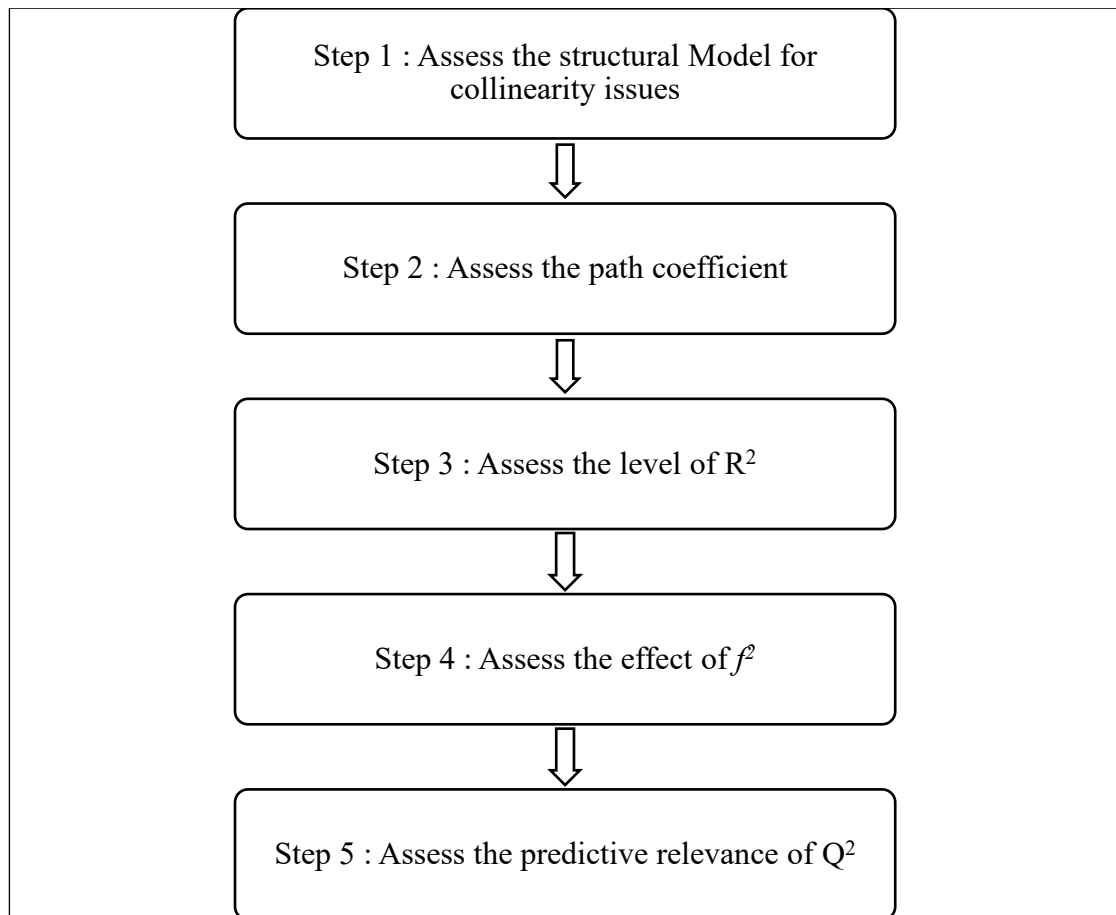


Figure 4.3 The Five Steps Procedure for Structural Model Assessment (Hair et al., 2014)

4.8.1 Step 1: Assessment of Collinearity (VIF values)

Prior to evaluating the structural model, it is important to ensure that there are no collinearity issues. This is to ensure that the results are not biased by multicollinearity. Collinearity was assessed using Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values, where values below 5.0 (and ideally below 3.0) indicate no critical collinearity issues (Hair et al., 2022). Table 4.36 presents the outcome of the collinearity test.

Table 4.36
Collinearity Assessment

	SMEE	SMFC	SMH	SMHM	SMPE	SMSI	Voters' Choice	YVBI
SMEE								1.65
SMFC							1.43	1.99
SMH							1.17	1.34

SMHM	1.58
SMPE	1.82
SMSI	1.96
Voters' Choice	
YVBI	1.34

The results demonstrate that all VIF values are comfortably below the conservative threshold of 3.0, ranging from 1.17 to 1.99. This indicates that there are no multicollinearity issues among the predictor constructs in the model. Specifically, the predictors of Young Voters' Behavioural Intention (YVBI), including SMEE (1.65), SMFC (1.99), SMH (1.34), SMHM (1.58), SMPE (1.82), and SMSI (1.96), all recorded VIF values well within the acceptable range. Likewise, the predictors of Voters' Choice SMFC (1.43), SMH (1.17), and YVBI (1.34) also showed low collinearity.

These results suggest that each construct contributes uniquely to the model without significant redundancy, thereby allowing accurate estimation of path coefficients. The absence of collinearity further strengthens confidence in the stability and interpretability of the structural model.

The findings confirm that the constructs measuring social media acceptance (SMPE, SMEE, SMFC, SMHM, SMH, SMSI) and their influence on behavioural intention (YVBI), as well as the subsequent effect on voters' choice, are statistically independent of one another. This ensures that the predictive relationships examined in the structural model are not biased by multicollinearity, thereby supporting the robustness of hypothesis testing. All VIFs (1.17–1.99) are below the conservative 3.0 threshold (Hair et al., 2022), indicating no collinearity concerns.

4.8.2 Step 2: Assess the path coefficient

The second stage of the structural model assessment involves examining the path coefficients (β values) to determine the strength, direction, and significance of the hypothesised relationships between constructs. Path coefficients indicate the extent to which one construct influences another in the model, with higher values reflecting stronger predictive effects. The significance of these relationships was tested using a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples, which generated t-values, p-values, and

confidence intervals for each path. The assessment of path coefficients evaluates the significance of hypothesised relationships among constructs.

4.8.2.1 Direct Effects: UTAUT2 Constructs → Young Voters' Behavioural Intention

This subsection examines how Social Media Performance Expectancy (SMPE), Effort Expectancy (SMEE), Social Influence (SMSI), Facilitating Conditions (SMFC), Hedonic Motivation (SMHM), and Habit (SMH) affect Young Voters' Behavioural Intention (YVBI). Six (6) hypotheses were developed to examine the direct relationship between UTAUT2 constructs and Young Voters' Behavioural Intention. Table 4.37 presents the results of the path coefficient analysis.

- H1 Social media performance expectancy (SMPE) has a significant positive effect towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI).
- H2 Social media effort expectancy (SMEE) has a significant positive effect towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI).
- H3 Social media social influence (SMSI) has a significant positive effect towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI).
- H4 Social media facilitating conditions (SMFC) have a significant positive effect towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI).
- H5 Social media hedonic motivation (SMHM) has a significant positive effect towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI).
- H6 Social media habit (SMH) has a significant positive effect towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI).

Table 4.37
Path Coefficient for H1 to H6

Hypotheses	Path	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Std deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values	Results
H1	SMPE -> YVBI	0.21	0.21	0.05	4.24	0.00	Supported
H2	SMEE -> YVBI	-0.03	-0.03	0.04	0.74	0.46	Not Supported
H3	SMSI -> YVBI	0.34	0.34	0.06	6.27	0.00	Supported
H4	SMFC -> YVBI	-0.01	-0.01	0.05	0.13	0.89	Not Supported
H5	SMHM -> YVBI	0.39	0.39	0.05	7.83	0.00	Supported
H6	SMH -> YVBI	0.01	0.01	0.04	0.32	0.75	Not Supported

Criteria: **p<0.01, *p<0.05

The results reveal that hedonic motivation (SMHM) is the most influential predictor of young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI), with a path coefficient of $\beta = 0.39$ ($t = 7.83$, $p < .001$). This indicates that when young voters perceive social media as fun, enjoyable, and stimulating, they are significantly more likely to use it for political participation. This finding underscores the role of emotional gratification and entertainment value as central drivers of young voters' political participation in the digital sphere.

Social influence (SMSI) also had a strong positive effect on behavioural intention ($\beta = 0.34$, $t = 6.27$, $p < .001$), suggesting that the expectations of peers, friends, and important social groups strongly shape young voters' willingness to participate politically on social media. Alongside this, performance expectancy (SMPE) was significant ($\beta = 0.21$, $t = 4.24$, $p < .001$), indicating that young voters are more likely to engage when they believe social media is an effective and useful tool for political participation. Collectively, these results suggest that young voters' intention to use social media politically is shaped primarily by enjoyment, social norms, and perceived utility, rather than by technical or structural considerations.

In contrast, effort expectancy (SMEE, $\beta = -0.03$, $t = 0.74$, $p = 0.46$), facilitating conditions (SMFC, $\beta = -0.01$, $t = 0.13$, $p = 0.89$), and habit (SMH, $\beta = 0.01$, $t = 0.32$, $p = 0.75$) did not significantly predict behavioural intention. This indicates that ease of use, access to resources, and routine social media use are not decisive factors in determining whether young voters intend to engage politically.

4.8.2.2 Direct Effects: Behavioural Intention and UTAUT2 Constructs → Voters' Choice

This section examines the direct effects proposed in Hypotheses H7 to H9, which evaluate the influence of facilitating conditions, habit, and behavioural intention on young voters' actual voting choice. In line with RO3 and RO6, these paths examine the direct relationship between UTAUT2 constructs and Voters' Choice. The analysis provides evidence on the direct predictors of voting choice within the integrated model.

- H7 Social media facilitating conditions (SMFC) have a significant positive effect on voters' choice.
- H8 Social media habit (SMH) have a significant positive effect towards voters' choice.
- H9 Young Voters' Behavioural Intention (YVBI) has significant effects on voters' choice.

Turning to predictors of voters' choice, the results show that both facilitating conditions ($\beta = 0.34$, $t = 7.06$, $p < .001$) and habit ($\beta = 0.21$, $t = 4.32$, $p < .001$) exert significant direct effects. This suggests that when young voters feel supported by the necessary resources and when social media use is embedded as a habitual behaviour, their actual voting decisions are more likely to be influenced. Furthermore, behavioural intention (YVBI) significantly predicts voters' choice ($\beta = 0.22$, $t = 4.05$, $p < .001$), confirming its mediating role between social media acceptance constructs and electoral outcomes. Table 4.38 presents the results of the path coefficient analysis for H7 to H9.

Table 4.38
Path Coefficient for H7 to H9

Hypotheses	Path	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Std deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values	Results
H7	SMFC -> Voters' Choice	0.34	0.35	0.05	7.06	0.00	Supported
H8	SMH -> Voters' Choice	0.21	0.21	0.05	4.32	0.00	Supported
H9	YVBI -> Voters' Choice	0.22	0.21	0.05	4.05	0.00	Supported

Criteria: **p<0.01, *p<0.05

Generally, these results highlight that intention to use social media for political participation is strongly driven by motivational and social factors. At the same time, actual voting behaviour is influenced by both intention and practical conditions of use. The findings reinforce the integrated framework of this research, showing how constructs from Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) (hedonic motivation, social influence, performance expectancy) combine with Newman and Sheth's model of voter behaviour to explain young voters' electoral decision-making in the Malaysian context.

4.8.2.3 Step 3: Assess the level of R^2

The third step in evaluating a structural model is to assess its R^2 level. The coefficient of determination (R^2) assesses the model's explanatory power by measuring the proportion of variance in the endogenous constructs that is accounted for by the exogenous constructs. It represents the amount of variance in the endogenous constructs explained by the exogenous constructs linked to it (Hair et al., 2014). The R^2 value ranges from 0 to 1. According to Hair et al. (2022), R^2 values of 0.25, 0.50, and 0.75 can be interpreted as weak, moderate, and substantial levels of predictive accuracy, respectively. In the context of PLS-SEM, R^2 is a key measure of the model's explanatory power and is used to assess how well the theoretical model predicts the outcomes of interest (Hair et al., 2022). In this research, two endogenous variables were evaluated, which are Young Voters' Behavioural Intention (YVBI) and Voters' Choice. Table 4.39 presents the values indicating the proportion of variance explained by the predictors for each construct.

Table 4.39
Assessment of R^2

Construct	R-square	R-square adjusted	Effect Size
Voters' Choice	0.36	0.35	Weak
YVBI	0.59	0.58	Moderate

Criteria: 0.75 – Substantial, 0.50 – Moderate, 0.25 – Weak (Hair et al., 2014)

As shown in Table 4.39, the R^2 value for YVBI is 0.59, indicating that approximately 59% of the variance in young voters' behavioural intention to use social media for political participation is explained by the exogenous variables in the model

(SMPE, SMEE, SMSI, SMFC, SMHM, SMH). This represents a moderate to substantial level of explanatory power, suggesting a well-fitting model in predicting behavioural intention.

On the other hand, the R^2 value for Voters' Choice is 0.36, implying that 36% of the variance in actual voting choice is accounted for by the combination of predictors, including YVBI and SMFC. While this indicates a moderate level of predictive accuracy, it also highlights that other external or contextual variables not included in this model may influence voting choice.

These findings demonstrate that the model performs better in predicting intention (YVBI) than actual behaviour (Voters' Choice), aligning with the expectation that perceptual and attitudinal factors more directly influence behavioural intention. In contrast, actual voting decisions may be shaped by broader, often situational, considerations. It also demonstrates that the proposed integrated model has sufficient predictive capability to explain young voters' social media-driven behavioural intentions and their final voting decision.

4.8.2.4 Step 4: Assess the effect size f^2

The effect size f^2 is used to assess whether a latent variable, when removed from the structural model, changes the R^2 values. Hence, the assessment of effect size seeks to evaluate whether latent constructs have a substantive impact on endogenous constructs. The effect size results are shown in Table 4.40.

Table 4.40

Assessment of Effect Size (f^2) for Endogenous Constructs: Voters' Choice and Young Voters' Behavioural Intention

Construct	f^2 (Voters' Choice)	Effect Size	f^2 (YVBI)	Effect Size
SMPE	-	-	0.05	Small
SMEE	0.14	Small	0.002	Negligible
SMSI	-	-	0.16	Medium
SMFC	0.03	Small	0.001	Negligible
SMHM	-	-	0.21	Medium
SMH	0.03	Small	0	No Effect
YVBI	0.05	Small	-	-

The effect size (f^2) values were examined to assess the unique contribution of each exogenous construct to the endogenous variables (YVBI and Voters' Choice) after controlling for other predictors. As shown in Table 4.40, two predictors had a medium effect on Young Voters' Behavioural Intention (YVBI), which are Social Media Hedonic Motivation (SMHM; $f^2 = 0.21$) and Social Media Social Influence (SMSI; $f^2 = 0.16$). These results suggest that enjoyment and peer pressure significantly influence young voters' intention to use social media for political participation.

In contrast, Social Media Performance Expectancy (SMPE) had a small effect ($f^2 = 0.05$), while SMEE, SMFC, and SMH demonstrated negligible effects on YVBI, indicating their limited role in shaping behavioural intention.

Voters' Choice, YVBI had a small effect ($f^2 = 0.05$), while SMFC ($f^2 = 0.13$) and SMH ($f^2 = 0.06$) also demonstrated small but notable effects. These findings imply that while social media behavioural intention does play a role in actual voting decisions, other factors, such as habitual usage and the facilitating conditions of social media, also subtly influence voters' choices.

Overall, the effect size analysis clarified the relative strength of each predictor in influencing the outcomes of interest, further supporting the model's practical implications for political communication research.

4.8.2.5 Step 5: Assess the predictive relevance of Q^2

A model's predictive relevance (Q^2) evaluates its ability to predict endogenous constructs using the PLS-Predict procedure in structural equation modelling (SEM). A Q^2 value greater than zero indicates the model has predictive relevance for a given dependent construct, while a value close to or below zero suggests poor predictive capability (Hair et al., 2019). In order to evaluate the model's predictive relevance, the blindfolding procedure was applied. It computes the Q^2 values based on cross-validated redundancy. According to Hair et al. (2022), Q^2 values greater than 0 indicate predictive relevance for the endogenous constructs.

Prominent benchmarks suggest that Q^2 values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 reflect small, medium, and large predictive relevance, respectively (Hair et al., 2022). This measure goes beyond R^2 by focusing on prediction accuracy rather than the model's explanatory power, making it particularly valuable for assessing practical implications

in applied settings. Table 4.41 presents the predictive relevance and accuracy of endogenous constructs values for both Young Voters' Behavioural Intention (YVBI) and Voters' Choice.

Table 4.41
Predictive Relevance and Accuracy of Endogenous Constructs (PLS-Predict)

Constructs	Q ² predict	Interpretations
Voters' Choice	0.35	Large predictive relevance
YVBI	0.57	Large predictive relevance

Criteria: 0.02 – small effect size, 0.15 – medium effect size, 0.35 – large effect size (Hair et al., 2014)

Young Voters' Behavioural Intention (YVBI) recorded a Q² predict value of 0.57, which surpasses the 0.35 threshold. This indicates that the model has strong predictive relevance in estimating young voters' intention to use social media for political participation. The results suggested that the YVBI predictors perform well in generating accurate and reliable out-of-sample predictions. This supports the model's practical usefulness in anticipating behavioural intention in real-world digital political contexts.

Voters' Choice (VC) yielded a Q² predict value of 0.35, exactly at the threshold for large predictive relevance. This suggests that the model can accurately predict voters' actual political choices based on the included predictors, such as YVBI, SMH, SMFC, and SMSI. Although slightly lower than YVBI, the result still confirms substantial predictive power, especially considering that actual voting behaviour is typically harder to predict than intention due to additional external factors such as last-minute decision-making, campaign events, and peer influence. These results demonstrate that the model possesses sufficient predictive capability for both constructs, supporting its practical and theoretical robustness (Hair et al., 2019; Sarstedt et al., 2021).

4.9 Assessment of the Mediating Effect of Young Voters' Behavioural Intention (YVBI)

This section investigates the mediating role of Young Voters' Behavioural Intention (YVBI) in the relationship between six key social media constructs and voters' choice. In particular, the analysis focuses on determining whether Young Voters'

Behavioural Intention (YVBI) serves as an intermediary mechanism that explains how and why constructs such as performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, facilitating conditions, hedonic motivation, and habit, as derived from the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) model, affect actual voting decisions among young voters. Six (6) hypotheses were constructed to examine the mediating effect of Young Voters' Behavioural Intention (YVBI). It was tested with mediation and was confirmed when the 95% BCa CI excludes zero. The hypotheses are as follows:

- H10 Young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) mediates the relationship between social media performance expectancy (SMPE) and voters' choice.
- H11 Young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) mediates the relationship between social media effort expectancy (SMEE) and voters' choice.
- H12 Young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) mediates the relationship between social media social influence (SMSI) and voters' choice.
- H13 Young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) mediates the relationship between social media facilitating conditions (SMFC) and voters' choice.
- H14 Young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) mediates the relationship between social media hedonic motivation (SMHM) and voters' choice.
- H15 Young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) mediates the relationship between social media habit (SMH) and voters' choice.

In line with Research Objectives RO10 to RO15, mediation was assessed through the specific indirect effects of each exogenous construct—Social Media Performance Expectancy (SMPE), Effort Expectancy (SMEE), Social Influence (SMSI), Facilitating Conditions (SMFC), Hedonic Motivation (SMHM), and Habit (SMH)—on Voters' Choice (VC) via YVBI. Direct $X \rightarrow VC$ paths were not hypothesised in the structural model; thus, only indirect effects were estimated.

Following Hair et al. (2022) and Zhao, Lynch, and Chen (2010), mediation was confirmed when the bootstrapped 95% confidence interval (CI) for the indirect effect excluded zero. Bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples produced the standardised path coefficients (β), t-values, p-values, and bias-corrected confidence intervals shown in Table 4.42.

Table 4.42

Results of Mediating Analysis and Mediation Type

Hypothesis	Path	β	t	p	95% CI	Decision
H10	SMPE $\rightarrow$ YVBI $\rightarrow$ VC	0.045	2.895	0.004	[0.019, 0.080]	Supported
H11	SMEE $\rightarrow$ YVBI $\rightarrow$ VC	-0.007	0.732	0.464	[-0.024, 0.014]	Not supported
H12	SMSI $\rightarrow$ YVBI $\rightarrow$ VC	0.074	3.212	0.001	[0.036, 0.126]	Supported
H13	SMFC $\rightarrow$ YVBI $\rightarrow$ VC	-0.002	0.130	0.897	[-0.025, 0.022]	Not supported
H14	SMHM $\rightarrow$ YVBI $\rightarrow$ VC	0.083	3.610	0.000	[0.041, 0.129]	Supported
H15	SMH $\rightarrow$ YVBI $\rightarrow$ VC	0.003	0.317	0.751	[-0.017, 0.021]	Not supported

The findings reveal three significant indirect effects. First, H10 (SMPE $\rightarrow$ YVBI $\rightarrow$ VC) was supported ($\beta = 0.045$, $t = 2.895$, $p = .004$, 95 % CI [0.019, 0.080]). This indicates that when young voters perceive social media as useful and capable of enhancing their political knowledge or participation, they develop stronger behavioural intentions to use these platforms for political purposes. It confirms that YVBI strengthens the influence of SMPE on voters' choice.

Second, H12 (SMSI $\rightarrow$ YVBI $\rightarrow$ VC) was also supported ($\beta = 0.074$, $t = 3.212$, $p = .001$, 95 % CI [0.036, 0.126]). This suggested that social cues and peer endorsement significantly increase young voters' willingness to engage politically online, which in turn motivates electoral participation. It indicated that YVBI enhances SMSI's influence on voters' choices.

Third, H14 (SMHM $\rightarrow$ YVBI $\rightarrow$ VC) exhibited the strongest mediation effect ($\beta = 0.083$, $t = 3.610$, $p < .001$, 95 % CI [0.041, 0.129]). This demonstrates that enjoyment, entertainment value, and emotional gratification derived from social media use enhance young voters' intention to engage with political content, which in turn influences their ultimate voting choice. The result indicates that YVBI reinforces the impact of SMHM on voters' choice.

On the other hand, H11 (SMEE $\rightarrow$ YVBI $\rightarrow$ VC), H13 (SMFC $\rightarrow$ YVBI $\rightarrow$ VC), and H15 (SMH $\rightarrow$ YVBI $\rightarrow$ VC) were not supported, as their indirect paths were insignificant ($p > .05$). The non-significant effect of SMEE ($\beta = -0.007$, $t = 0.732$, $p = .464$) indicates that perceived ease of use does not meaningfully strengthen political intention among digitally literate young voters, who already possess sufficient platform familiarity. Similarly, SMFC ($\beta = -0.002$, $t = 0.130$, $p = .897$) did not exhibit a mediating effect, suggesting that access to resources or technical support does not indirectly shape voting behaviour through intention. Finally, SMH ($\beta = 0.003$, $t = 0.317$, $p = .751$) showed no significant mediation, implying that habitual use of social media does not automatically convert into political behavioural intention leading to voting choice.

Simultaneously, these results confirm that YVBI serves as a behavioural conduit linking psychological and social-motivational determinants, such as performance expectancy, social influence, and hedonic motivation, to voters' choice. In contrast, structural or habitual factors exert no indirect effect. Figure 4.2 illustrates the assessment of the mediating effects.

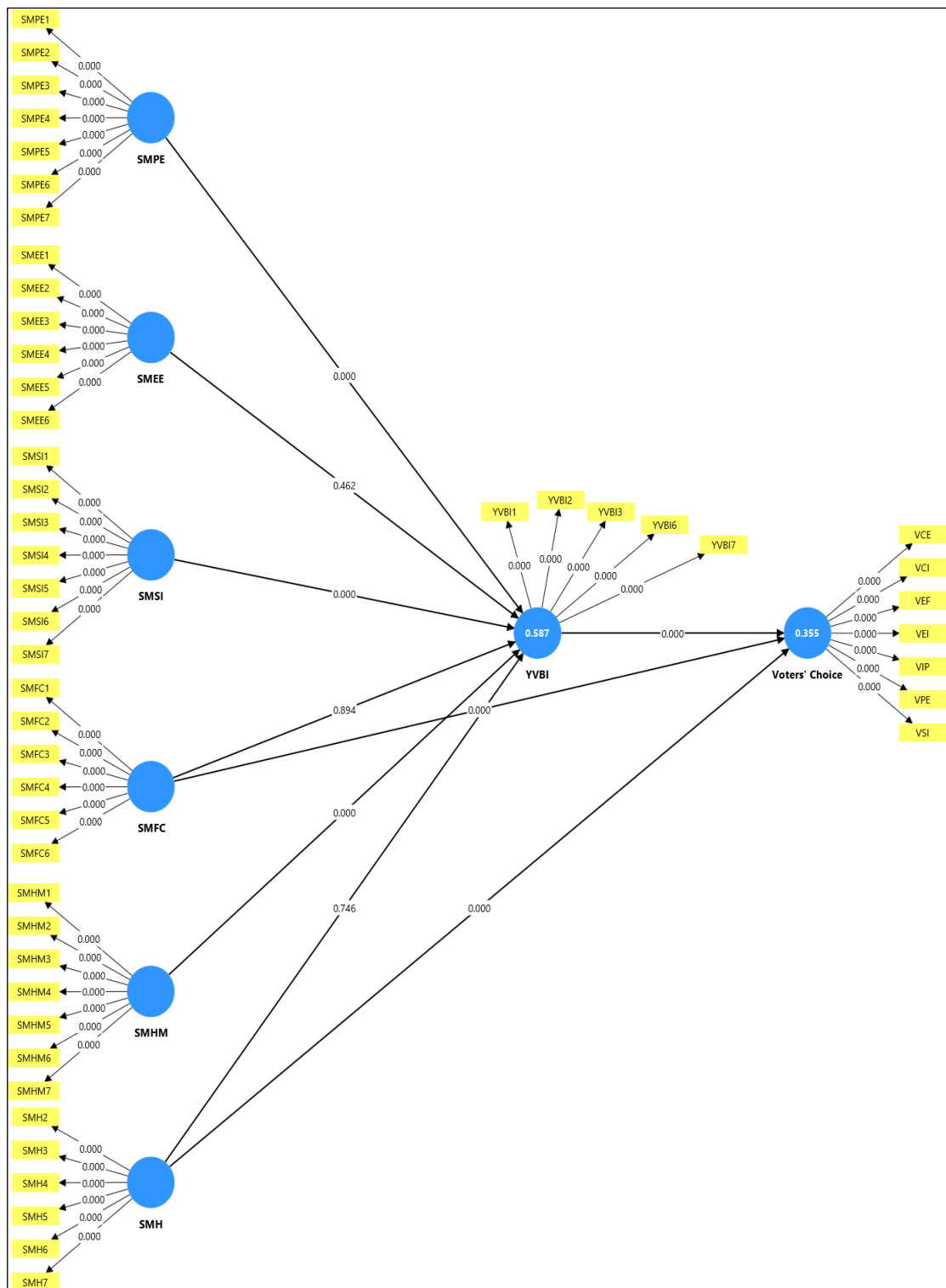


Figure 4.4 Assessing the Mediating Effects

4.10 Assessment of Moderating Effect of Experience

This section presents the analysis of the moderating effect of experience. Five (5) hypotheses were developed to assess the effect of experience, young voters' behavioural intention and voter choice. The hypotheses are as follows:

- H16 Experience will moderate the effect of social media facilitating conditions (SMFC) towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI).
- H17 Experience will moderate the effect of social media hedonic motivation (SMHM) towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI).
- H18 Experience will moderate the effect of social media habit (SMH) towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI).
- H19 Experience will moderate the effect of social media habit (SMH) on voters' choice.
- H20 Experience will moderate the effect of young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) on voters' choice.

Moderating effects were tested by specifying interaction terms between Experience and the focal predictors on the relevant endogenous variables in SmartPLS 4 (two-stage approach). Estimation used 5,000 bootstrap resamples (two-tailed) with Percentile 95% confidence intervals. Moderation is concluded when the interaction path (Experience $\times$ SMFC $\rightarrow$ YVBI) has a CI that excludes zero. Table 4.43 presents the assessment of the moderating effect of experience in the structural model, while Table 4.44 presents the conditional direct effects for SMH $\rightarrow$ YVBI (simple slopes). Following the integrated model, Experience was tested as a moderator on selected UTAUT2 $\rightarrow$ YVBI and UTAUT2/YVBI $\rightarrow$ VC paths.

Table 4.43

Results of the Moderating Effect

Hypotheses	Interaction (moderation path)	β (O)	T values	P values	95% CI	Decision
H16	Experience $\times$ SMFC $\rightarrow$ YVBI	0.06	1.31	0.19	[-0.024, 0.14]	Not significant
H17	Experience $\times$ SMHM $\rightarrow$ YVBI	-0.03	0.72	0.47	[-0.097, 0.04]	Not significant
H18	Experience $\times$ SMH $\rightarrow$ YVBI	0.09	2.34	0.02	[0.013, 0.16]	Significant moderation
H19	Experience $\times$ SMH $\rightarrow$ Voters' Choice	0.04	0.95	0.34	[-0.048, 0.12]	Not significant
H20	Experience $\times$ YVBI $\rightarrow$ Voters' Choice	-0.03	0.67	0.51	[-0.122, 0.07]	Not significant

Table 4.44

Conditional direct effects for SMH $\rightarrow$ YVBI

Condition	β (conditional)	t	p
-1 SD Experience	-0.057	0.900	0.368
Mean Experience	0.029	0.644	0.520
+1 SD Experience	0.115	2.169	0.030

Based on the results, only one interaction reached significance: Experience $\times$ Habit (SMH) $\rightarrow$ YVBI ($\beta = 0.09$, 95% CI [0.013, 0.16], $p = .02$), indicating that the effect of habit on intention depends on respondents' level of experience. The simple-slopes probe shows a clear pattern of amplification with experience: at high Experience (+1 SD) the SMH $\rightarrow$ YVBI path is positive and significant ($\beta = .115$, $p = .030$), at the mean it is near zero and non-significant ($\beta = .029$, $p = .520$), and at low Experience (-1 SD) it is slightly negative and non-significant ($\beta = -.057$, $p = .368$). Substantively, among more experienced users, routinised social media use is more likely to crystallise into a stated intention to engage (YVBI). In contrast, among less experienced users, habit does not translate into intention.

All other Experience-based interactions were not significant such as Experience $\times$ SMFC $\rightarrow$ YVBI ($\beta = .056$, $p = .192$, CI [-0.024, .144]), Experience $\times$ SMH $\rightarrow$ Voters' Choice ($\beta = .041$, $p = .343$, CI [-0.048, .124]), Experience $\times$ SMHM $\rightarrow$ YVBI ($\beta = -.025$, $p = .473$, CI [-0.097, .042]), and Experience $\times$ YVBI $\rightarrow$ Voters' Choice ($\beta = -.032$, $p = .505$, CI [-0.122, .067]). Hence, Experience does not reliably alter the links from facilitating conditions or hedonic motivation to intention, nor does it change how intention maps onto voters' choice or how habit directly predicts choice. All things considered, the moderation evidence isolates a single conditional mechanism: experience strengthens the habit $\rightarrow$ intention pathway, while the rest of the structural relations remain invariant across experience levels. Figure 4.5 illustrates the simple slopes for the effect of Habit (SMH) on YVBI at low (-1 SD), mean, and high (+1 SD) levels of Experience.

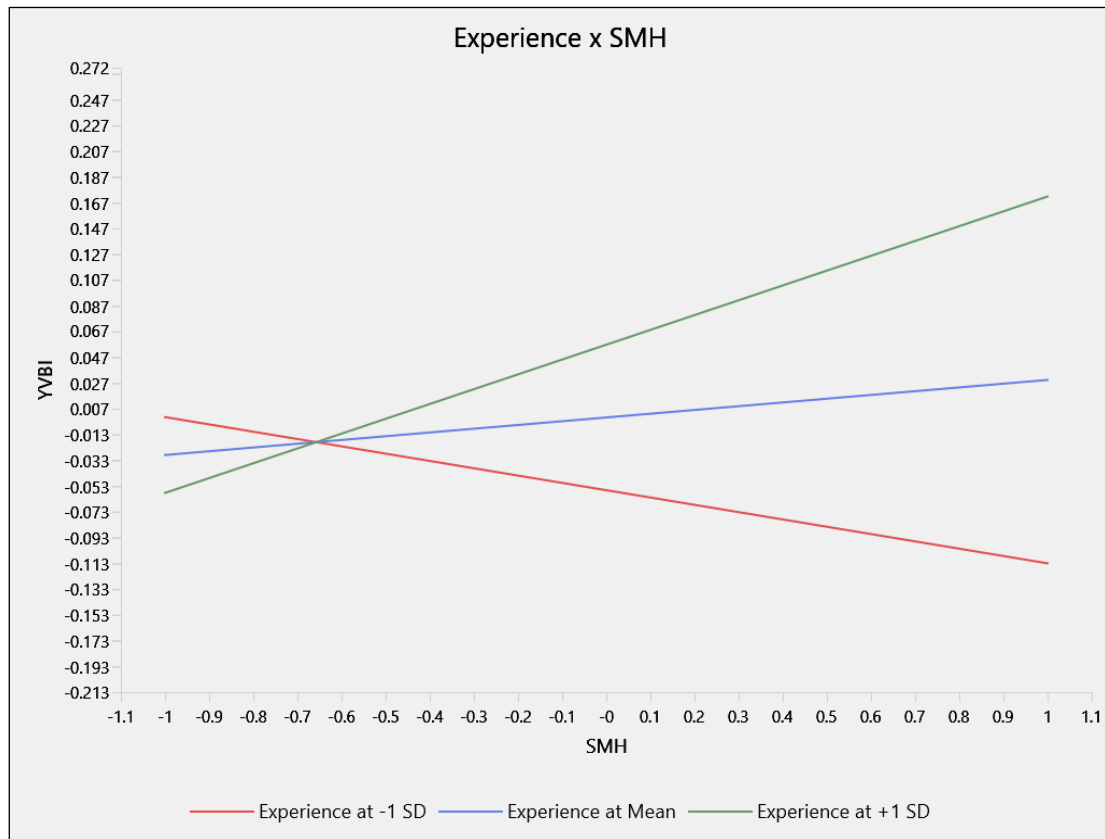


Figure 4.5 Simple slopes for the effect of Habit (SMH) on YVBI at low (-1 SD), mean, and high ($+1$ SD) levels of Experience.

The significant Experience $\times$ Habit (SMH) $\rightarrow$ YVBI interaction was interpreted through conditional direct effects of SMH on YVBI at three levels of Experience: low (-1 SD), mean, and high ($+1$ SD). At high Experience, the SMH $\rightarrow$ YVBI slope was significant and positive ($\beta = .115$, $p = .030$). At the mean level, the effect was minimal and non-significant ($\beta = .029$, $p = .520$). At low Experience, the slope was slightly negative and non-significant ($\beta = -.057$, $p = .368$). The divergence of slopes across Experience levels, as illustrated in Figure 4.5, reveals a crossover moderation pattern. Habit exerts a strengthening effect on behavioural intention among respondents with higher Experience, while among less experienced individuals, increased habitual use does not enhance intention.

This interaction suggests that habitual engagement with social media translates into political behavioural intention only when accompanied by sufficient prior experience. In contrast, respondents with limited experience do not exhibit the same gains in intention, even when habitual use is present. The moderation pattern underscores the importance of experiential familiarity in activating the motivational potential of habit, reinforcing dual-process perspectives in which automatic behaviours

require contextual reinforcement to influence reflective outcomes. Figure 4.6 presents the moderating effect of experience in the structural model.

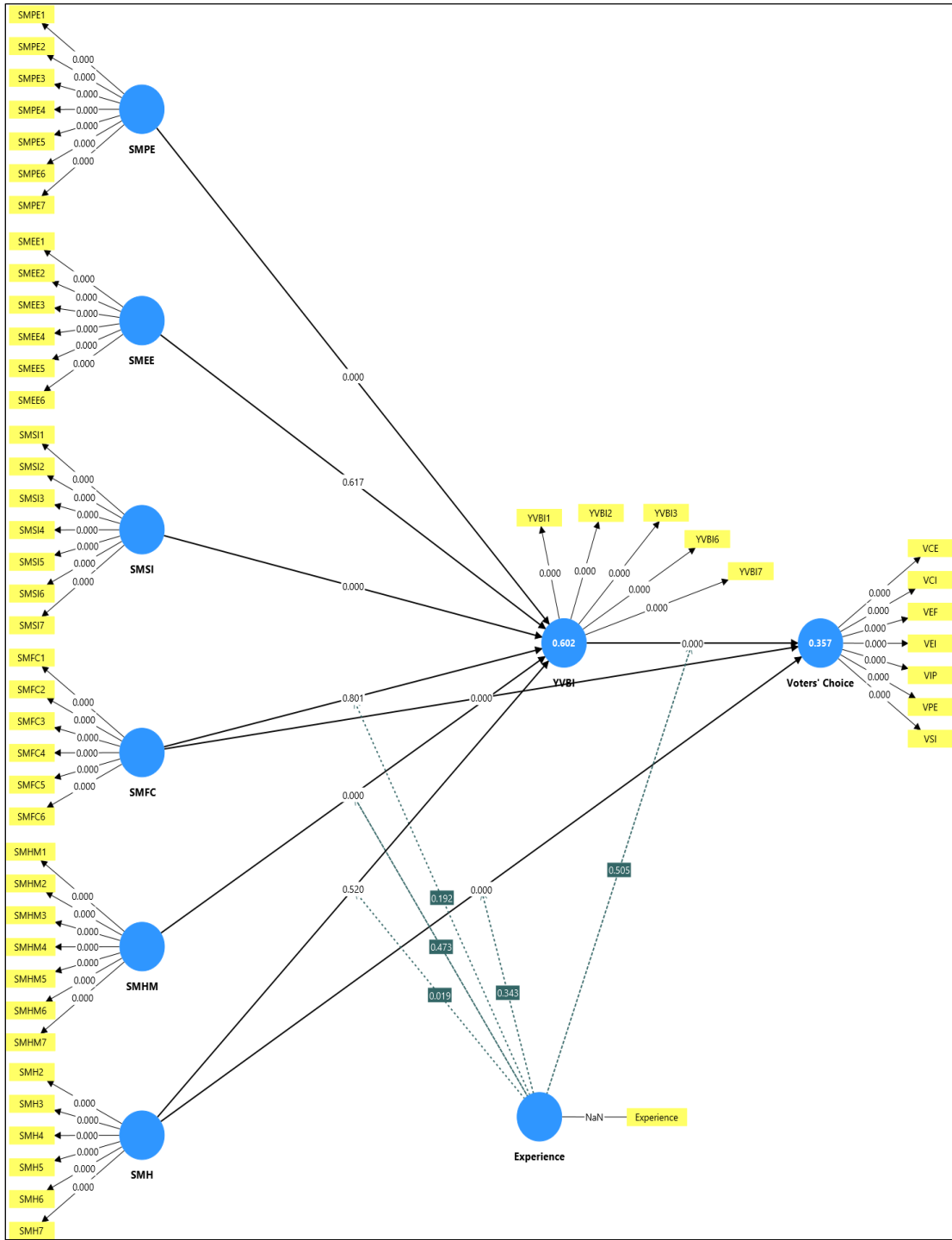


Figure 4.6 Assessing the Moderating Effects

4.11 Evaluation of the Integrated Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) and Newman & Sheth's Model of Primary Voter Behaviour (H21)

This section evaluates Hypothesis 21 (H21), which posits that the integration of the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) with Newman and Sheth's (1985) voter behaviour model provides a comprehensive explanation of young voters' electoral choice in Malaysia. Unlike earlier sections that focused on testing specific relationships among constructs (H1–H20), this hypothesis addresses the overall explanatory power and predictive capability of the combined framework. Accordingly, the evaluation emphasises model-level performance indicators, including variance explained (R^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), and model fit indices (SRMR, NFI). In order to strengthen the analysis, the explanatory and predictive capacities of the integrated model are compared against baseline models, which are Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) alone and Newman & Sheth's Model of Primary Voter Behaviour alone. This comparative approach allows for a clearer assessment of whether the integration yields incremental value. It thus provides a more holistic account of how social media acceptance factors and traditional voter-choice determinants jointly influence electoral decision-making among young Malaysian voters. The hypothesis that evaluates the integration of the model is as follows:

H21 The integrated Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) and Newman & Sheth's Model of Primary Voter Behaviour demonstrate explanatory and predictive power for voter choice.

4.11.1 Model Fit

The first step in evaluating the integrated model is to assess overall model fit. Model fit indices provide evidence of how well the proposed framework reproduces the observed data structure. In this research, the Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) and Normed Fit Index (NFI) are reported, as they are commonly recommended in variance-based SEM for model-level evaluation (Hair et al., 2022). An SRMR value below 0.08 and an NFI value above 0.90 are generally indicative of acceptable fit. These indices establish the extent to which the integrated Unified Theory of Acceptance and

Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) and Newman & Sheth's Model of Primary Voter Behaviour are consistent with the empirical data. Table 4.45 presents the model fit indices for the integrated Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) and Newman & Sheth's Model of Primary Voter Behaviour.

Table 4.45
Model Fit Indices of the Integrated Model

Fit Index	Threshold	Estimated Model Value	Interpretation
SRMR	< 0.08	0.07	Acceptable fit
NFI	> 0.90	0.75	Below ideal, but acceptable for PLS-SEM in exploratory research

The SRMR value of 0.07 falls below the recommended threshold of 0.08, indicating that the proposed model demonstrates an acceptable level of fit. The NFI value of 0.75, although lower than the conventional benchmark of 0.90, is consistent with values typically observed in variance-based SEM studies and is considered adequate in exploratory research contexts. These results suggest that the integrated model demonstrates satisfactory model fit, supporting its suitability for further structural analysis.

4.11.2 Explanatory Power (R^2)

Beyond model fit, explanatory power is a critical measure of a model's usefulness. The coefficient of determination (R^2) indicates the proportion of variance in the endogenous constructs of Young Voters' Behavioural Intention (YVBI) and Voters' Choice (VC) explained by the integrated framework. Higher R^2 values indicate greater explanatory power, thereby supporting the model's comprehensiveness. In this section, R^2 values from the integrated model are presented and compared with those from the UTAUT2-only and Newman & Sheth-only models to assess whether integration enhances explanatory power. Table 4.46 presents the explanatory power of the integrated model.

Table 4.46

Structural Model Evaluation – R^2 , Adjusted R^2 , and Effect Size for Endogenous Constructs

Endogenous Construct	R^2	R^2 Adjusted	Effect Size	Interpretation
Voters' Choice (VC)	0.36	0.35	Weak	The model explains 36% of the variance in voters' choices.
YVBI	0.59	0.58	Moderate	The model explains 59% of the variance in young voters' behavioural intention.

The model explained 36% of the variance in Voters' Choice ($R^2 = 0.36$), which is interpreted as a weak effect according to Cohen's (1988) guidelines. The model explained 59% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.59$) for Young Voters' Behavioural Intention (YVBI), reflecting a moderate effect. These results indicate that while the integrated model demonstrates stronger explanatory power for behavioural intention, it still captures a meaningful, though comparatively weaker, proportion of variance in actual voter choice. The R^2 adjusted values of 0.35 for VC and 0.58 for YVBI further confirm the robustness of these estimates.

4.11.3 Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

In addition to explanatory power, predictive relevance is assessed using the Stone-Geisser Q^2 statistic derived from PLSpredict procedures. A Q^2 value greater than zero indicates that the model has predictive capability beyond mere data fitting (Hair et al., 2021). The Q^2 results for YVBI and Voters' Choice are reported for the integrated model and benchmarked against the baseline models. This comparison assesses whether the integrated framework improves predictions of young voters' electoral behaviour. Table 4.47 presents the predictive relevance (Q^2) of the integrated model.

Table 4.47

Predictive Relevance (Q^2) of the Integrated Model

Endogenous Construct	Q^2 Predict	Interpretation
Voters' Choice (VC)	0.35	Large predictive relevance
YVBI	0.57	Large predictive relevance

Predictive relevance was assessed using PLSpredict, with Q^2 values reported for the endogenous constructs. As shown in Table 4.47, the integrated model achieved a Q^2

of 0.35 for Voters' Choice and 0.57 for YVBI. Both values exceed the 0.35 benchmark, indicating large predictive relevance (Hair et al., 2022). These results suggest that the integrated Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) and Newman & Sheth's Model of Primary Voter Behaviour possess strong predictive capability in explaining both behavioural intention and electoral choice among young voters in Malaysia.

4.11.4 Comparison with Baseline Models

In order to provide a more robust test of H21, the integrated model is contrasted with two baseline frameworks: Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) alone and Newman & Sheth's Model of Primary Voter Behaviour alone. This comparison highlights the incremental value of integration, particularly in terms of explained variance, predictive relevance, and model fit indices. Demonstrating that the integrated model outperforms the baseline models would support the hypothesis that combining social media acceptance constructs with traditional voter-choice determinants yields a more comprehensive explanation of young voters' electoral behaviour. Table 4.48 presents the comparison of baseline Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) and integrated (UTAUT2 and Newman & Sheth's Model of Primary Voter Behaviour) models.

Table 4.48
Comparison of Baseline (UTAUT2) and Integrated (UTAUT2 and Model of Primary Voter Behaviour) Models

Criterion	UTAUT2 Model	Integrated Model	Interpretation
R ² – Voter's Choice	0.005	0.357	Integration improves explanatory power (weak → moderate)
R ² – YVBI	0.586	0.602	Small increase in variance explained.
Q ² – Voter's Choice	0.005	0.342	Predictive relevance increases substantially.
Q ² – YVBI	0.569	0.577	Predictive relevance remains strong.
SRMR (Estimated)	0.074	0.073	Both within an acceptable threshold (<0.08).
NFI (Estimated)	0.761	0.746	Both moderate fit, minimal difference.

The results demonstrate that the baseline model explained only $R^2 = 0.005$ of the variance in Voter's Choice, while the integrated model accounted for $R^2 = 0.357$, indicating a substantial improvement in explanatory power. In terms of YVBI, the integrated model produced a marginal increase in variance explained ($R^2 = 0.602$) compared to the baseline model ($R^2 = 0.586$).

In terms of predictive relevance, the baseline model exhibited negligible predictive capacity for Voter's Choice ($Q^2 = 0.005$). By contrast, the integrated model achieved a Q^2 value of 0.342, reflecting large predictive relevance. Predictive relevance for YVBI remained strong in both models ($Q^2 = 0.569$ and 0.577).

Model fit indices further confirm adequacy, with SRMR values below the recommended 0.08 threshold (baseline = 0.074; integrated = 0.073) and NFI values around 0.75, indicating moderate fit.

Overall, these results confirm that incorporating Newman and Sheth's voter behaviour dimensions into the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) framework significantly enhances the model's ability to explain and predict young voters' electoral choices in Malaysia.

4.12 Robustness Checks

Robustness checks are conducted to ensure the stability, reliability, and validity of the structural model and its estimated relationships (Hair et al., 2022). In this research, several robustness analyses were performed to confirm that the main findings are not sensitive to methodological or statistical assumptions. These include controls robustness, which examines whether the inclusion of demographic variables such as age and gender affects the main path coefficients (Hair et al., 2022); endogeneity assessment, which uses full collinearity variance inflation factors (VIFs) to detect potential bias from correlations between predictors and error terms (Kock, 2015); and common-method bias evaluation, conducted through Harman's single-factor test to assess whether correlations among constructs are inflated due to the survey method (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Together, these checks assured that the observed relationships in the model are robust and reliable.

4.12.1 Bootstrap Method Robustness

In order to examine the stability of the estimation results, the integrated model was re-estimated using two alternative bootstrap methods: the Percentile and the Bias-Corrected and Accelerated (BCa) procedures, each with 5,000 resamples and two-tailed 95% confidence intervals. This robustness check ensures that the inference about supported versus unsupported hypotheses does not depend on the resampling technique.

As shown in Table 4.50, the significance decisions for all direct effects and mediation effects were identical under both methods. In order to test the mediation hypotheses, three specific indirect effects via young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) were consistently significant across both methods:

H10: Young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) mediates the relationship between social media performance expectancy (SMPE) and voters' choice.

H12: Young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) mediates the relationship between social media social influence (SMSI) and voters' choice.

H14: Young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) mediates the relationship between social media hedonic motivation (SMHM) and voters' choice.

All other specific indirect effects (H11, H13, H15) were non-significant under both methods. The total indirect effects mirrored this pattern, confirming the robustness of the mediation results. Direct effects likewise showed no differences in decision-making between the two bootstrap approaches.

These results confirm that the hypothesis testing outcomes are robust to the choice of bootstrap procedure, enhancing confidence in the stability of the findings. Table 4.49 presents the results for the bootstrap robustness check.

Table 4.49
Bootstrap Robustness Check (Percentile vs BCa, 5,000 subsamples)

Path / Effect	Hypothesis	Percentile (p)	BCa (p)	Decision Change	Supported
SMPE → YVBI → Voter's Choice (specific indirect)	H10	.007	.007	No	Supported
SMEE → YVBI → Voter's Choice (specific indirect)	H11	.623	.623	No	Not supported

Path / Effect	Hypothesis	Percentile (p)	BCa (p)	Decision Change	Supported
SMSI → YVBI → Voter's Choice (specific indirect)	H12	.002	.002	No	Supported
SMFC → YVBI → Voter's Choice (specific indirect)	H13	.809	.809	No	Not supported
SMHM → YVBI → Voter's Choice (specific indirect)	H14	.000	.000	No	Supported
SMH → YVBI → Voter's Choice (specific indirect)	H15	.529	.529	No	Not supported
Direct effects (all)	—	Stable	Stable	No changes	Mixed
Total indirect effects (all)	—	Mirror specific	Mirror specific	No changes	Mixed

In order to ensure that hypothesis decisions were not sensitive to the choice of resampling procedure, the integrated model was re-estimated using both Percentile and Bias-Corrected and Accelerated (BCa) bootstraps (5,000 resamples; two-tailed, 95% CIs). The results, summarised in Table 4.49, indicate that all significance decisions were identical across methods. Specifically, three mediation hypotheses were consistently supported under both approaches: H10 (SMPE → YVBI → Voter's Choice, $p = .007$), H12 (SMSI → YVBI → Voter's Choice, $p = .002$), and H14 (SMHM → YVBI → Voter's Choice, $p < .001$). The remaining mediation hypotheses (H11, H13, H15) were not significant in either run. The direct effects also showed no change in support status, while the total indirect effects mirrored the pattern of the specific indirect effects. These findings demonstrate that the results are robust to bootstrap specification, increasing confidence in the stability of the integrated model.

4.12.2 Controls Robustness

A second robustness check assessed whether the inclusion of control variables altered the main findings. Control variables tested included political interest, gender, and age, all of which were added as exogenous predictors of both YVBI and Voter's Choice.

In order to ensure that the hypothesised relationships in the model were not confounded by demographic factors, age and gender were included as control variables.

The robustness check examined whether including these controls altered the magnitude, significance, or direction of the direct and indirect effects of the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) constructs on Young Voters' Behavioural Intention (YVBI) and Voters' Choice.

As a robustness check, we re-estimated the direct and indirect effects after introducing statistical controls. The pattern and significance of key paths remained unchanged, indicating that our substantive conclusions are not artefacts of omitted controls. This strengthens confidence in the stability of the mediation and the sole significant moderation (Experience $\times$ Habit $\rightarrow$ YVBI). Table 4.50 presents the data on the direct and indirect effects of controls' robustness.

Table 4.50
Controls Robustness: Direct and Indirect Effects

Path	Original β	t-value	p-value	β with Controls	t-value	p-value
SMPE $\rightarrow$ YVBI	0.210	4.24	0.00	0.201	4.04	0.00
SMEE $\rightarrow$ YVBI	-0.030	0.74	0.46	-0.026	0.60	0.548
SMSI $\rightarrow$ YVBI	0.340	6.27	0.00	0.337	6.28	0.00
SMHM $\rightarrow$ YVBI	0.390	7.83	0.00	0.396	8.20	0.00
SMH $\rightarrow$ YVBI	0.010	0.32	0.75	0.035	0.80	0.422
YVBI $\rightarrow$ Voter's Choice	0.220	4.05	0.00	0.215	4.05	0.00
SMPE $\rightarrow$ YVBI $\rightarrow$ Voter's Choice	0.045	2.90	0.004	0.043	2.82	0.005
SMEE $\rightarrow$ YVBI $\rightarrow$ Voter's Choice	-0.007	0.73	0.464	-0.006	0.60	0.551
SMSI $\rightarrow$ YVBI $\rightarrow$ Voter's Choice	0.074	3.21	0.001	0.072	3.22	0.001
SMHM $\rightarrow$ YVBI $\rightarrow$ Voter's Choice	0.083	3.61	0.000	0.085	3.63	0.000
SMH $\rightarrow$ YVBI $\rightarrow$ Voter's Choice	0.003	0.32	0.751	0.008	0.79	0.429

The results indicate that including age and gender as control variables did not materially affect the main paths in the model. All significant direct effects, such as SMPE $\rightarrow$ YVBI, SMSI $\rightarrow$ YVBI, SMHM $\rightarrow$ YVBI, and YVBI $\rightarrow$ Voter's Choice, remained significant with very similar path coefficients and t-values, demonstrating that these relationships are robust to demographic controls. Likewise, the indirect (mediated) effects through YVBI, including SMPE $\rightarrow$ YVBI $\rightarrow$ Voter's Choice, SMSI $\rightarrow$ YVBI $\rightarrow$ Voter's Choice, and SMHM $\rightarrow$ YVBI $\rightarrow$ Voter's Choice, also remained significant and stable, confirming the mediation is not affected by controls. Non-

significant paths such as SMEE $\rightarrow$ YVBI and SMH $\rightarrow$ YVBI remained non-significant, further supporting the stability of the model. Overall, these findings suggest that the hypothesised relationships in the model are robust and reliable, and the inclusion of control variables does not alter the interpretation of the main effects or mediation pathways.

4.12.3 Endogeneity and Common-Method Bias (CMB) Checks

Endogeneity and common-method bias were assessed using collinearity diagnostics. First, inner VIF values in SmartPLS were examined, and all were below the conservative threshold of 3.3, suggesting no critical collinearity among predictors. Second, full-collinearity VIFs were computed by regressing latent variable scores on all other constructs. Again, all values were below 3.3, confirming that neither endogeneity nor common-method variance poses a major threat to validity.

In order to ensure the validity and reliability of the structural model, checks for endogeneity and common method bias (CMB) were conducted. Endogeneity can bias path coefficients when predictors correlate with the error term, while CMB may inflate correlations among constructs in self-reported survey data. Two complementary approaches were applied: (1) full collinearity variance inflation factors (VIFs) to examine endogeneity and multicollinearity, and (2) Harman's single-factor test to assess potential CMB.

Endogeneity arises when one or more predictor constructs are correlated with the model's error term, potentially biasing path coefficients and undermining the reliability of the results. To ensure that the structural relationships in this research are valid and unbiased, full collinearity variance inflation factors (VIFs) were calculated for all constructs. This approach is widely recommended in PLS-SEM research (Hair et al., 2022; Kock, 2015) because it allows the simultaneous detection of multicollinearity and potential endogeneity. Constructs with VIF values below 3.3 are generally considered free from serious endogeneity problems. Table 4.51 presents the full-collinearity VIFs for the constructs.

Table 4.51
Full Collinearity VIFs for Constructs

Construct	VIF	Interpretation
SMPE	2.40	Low collinearity; no endogeneity concern
SMEE	2.48	Low collinearity; no endogeneity concern
SMSI	2.31	Low collinearity; no endogeneity concern
SMFC	3.11	Slightly elevated but acceptable
SMHM	2.82	Low collinearity; no endogeneity concern
SMH	2.25	Low collinearity; no endogeneity concern
YVBI	2.78	Low collinearity; no endogeneity concern
Voter's Choice	2.00	Low collinearity; no endogeneity concern

The VIF values for all constructs range from 2.00 to 3.11, which are comfortably below the recommended threshold of 3.3. This indicates that multicollinearity is not a concern in the model and that the structural paths can be interpreted with confidence. The highest VIF is observed for SMFC (3.11), which is slightly closer to the threshold but still within acceptable limits; this suggests that while some variance is shared with other constructs, it does not meaningfully bias the path coefficients. All other constructs, including YVBI, SMPE, SMHM, SMH, SMSI, SMEE, and Voter's Choice, exhibit VIFs well below the threshold, confirming the stability of the relationships. Overall, the analysis demonstrates that the structural model is free from serious endogeneity, and the reported results can be considered robust and reliable.

Common-method bias (CMB) refers to the potential inflation of correlations among constructs when data are collected using the same method, such as a self-reported survey. In survey-based research, particularly in behavioural and social sciences, CMB can threaten the validity of the findings by introducing systematic variance unrelated to the constructs being measured. To address this concern, this research employed Harman's single-factor test, which assesses whether a single factor accounts for the majority of the variance across all measurement items. A first factor explaining less than 50% of the total variance suggests that CMB is unlikely to significantly influence the observed relationships among constructs. This approach, combined with other checks such as full collinearity VIFs, provides a robust assessment of potential method bias in the model. Table 4.52 shows Harman's single-factor test.

Table 4.52

Harman's Single-Factor Test (Principal Component Analysis)

Factor	Eigenvalue	% Variance Explained	Cumulative %
Factor 1	17.576	34.46	34.46
Factor 2	4.913	9.63	44.10
Factor 3	2.882	5.65	49.75

A Harman's single-factor test was conducted using all survey items across the constructs (SMPE, SMEE, SMSI, SMFC, SMHM, SMH, YVBI, and Voter's Choice) to assess CMB further. An unrotated Principal Component Analysis (PCA) extracted a total of 51 factors, of which only the first three are reported here for clarity. The first factor accounted for 34.46% of the total variance, the second 9.63%, and the third 5.65%, with a cumulative variance of 49.75% for the first three factors. Since the first factor explains well below the 50% threshold commonly cited as indicating serious CMB, this suggests that correlations among the items are driven by the constructs themselves rather than by the measurement method. The variance is distributed across multiple factors, demonstrating that no single factor dominates the covariance among the survey items. Combined with the VIF results, this provides strong evidence that CMB is unlikely to bias the structural model.

Overall, the results of the full-collinearity VIF analysis and Harman's single-factor test indicate that the structural model is robust, with no serious endogeneity or common-method bias affecting the results. Together, inner VIF (≤ 1.99), full-collinearity VIF (≤ 3.11), and Harman's single-factor ($< 50\%$) confirm the absence of multicollinearity and CMB. Therefore, the path coefficients, mediation effects, and overall model findings can be interpreted with confidence, supporting the validity and reliability of the research.

4.12.4 Summary of Robustness Checks

Collectively, the results indicate that the integrated model's explanatory and predictive validity is robust across resampling methods, alternative model specifications, and endogeneity/CMB concerns. To provide a comprehensive overview of the structural model's stability and reliability, a summary of all robustness checks was compiled. These checks included controls robustness, which examined whether the inclusion of demographic variables such as age and gender altered the main path

coefficients; endogeneity assessment using full collinearity VIFs to ensure that the predictor constructs were not correlated with error terms; and common-method bias evaluation through Harman's single-factor test to verify that correlations among constructs were not artificially inflated due to the survey method. Table 4.53 summarises the key results from these analyses and their overall interpretation, demonstrating the robustness of the hypothesised relationships in the model.

Table 4.53
Summary of Robustness Checks

Robustness Check	Key Metric / Result	Interpretation
Controls Robustness	Path coefficients with and without controls (Age, Gender) remained stable; main hypotheses such as SMPE → YVBI and YVBI → Voter's Choice remained unchanged.	Relationships are stable; demographic controls do not affect the main paths, supporting the robustness of the hypothesised effects.
Endogeneity (Full Collinearity VIF)	VIFs ranged from 2.00 (Voter's Choice) to 3.11 (SMFC)	No serious multicollinearity or endogeneity; all constructs below or around the 3.3 threshold, indicating stability of estimates
Common-Method Bias (Harman's Single-Factor Test)	The first factor accounted for 34.46% of the total variance; a total of 51 factors were extracted.	CMB is unlikely; first factor well below 50% threshold; observed correlations reflect actual constructs rather than method bias

4.13 Summary of hypothesis tests

This section summarises the results of the hypotheses assessment in this research. The hypothesised relationship was assessed using path analysis (direct effect) and mediation tests with bootstrapping to identify the indirect effect. Table 4.54 presents the statistical results for 21 hypotheses examining the relationships between social media acceptance, behavioural intention and voters' choice. Figure 4.7 shows the final structural model after the measurement model analysis.

Table 4.54
Summary of Hypotheses Assessment

Hypothesis	T statistics	P value	Model-level Indices	Outcome	Decision
Direct effects					
H1 Social media performance expectancy (SMPE) has a significant positive effect towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI).	4.24	0.00		Significant	Supported
H2 Social media effort expectancy (SMEE) has a significant positive effect towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI).	0.74	0.46		Not Significant	Not Supported
H3 Social media social influence (SMSI) has a significant positive effect towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI).	6.27	0.00		Significant	Supported
H4 Social media facilitating conditions (SMFC) have a significant positive effect towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI).	0.13	0.90		Not Significant	Not Supported
H5 Social media hedonic motivation (SMHM) has a significant positive effect towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI).	7.83	0.00		Significant	Supported
H6 Social media habit (SMH) has a significant positive effect towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI).	0.32	0.75		Not Significant	Not Supported
H7 Social media facilitating conditions (SMFC) has a significant positive effect on voters' choice.	7.06	0.00		Significant	Supported

H8	Social media habit (SMH) has a significant positive effect towards voters' choice.	4.32	0.00	Significant	Supported
H9	Young Voters' Behavioural Intention (YVBI) has significant effects on voters' choice.	4.05	0.00	Significant	Supported
Mediating Effects					
H10	Young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) mediates the relationship between social media performance expectancy (SMPE) and voters' choice.	2.90	0.00	Significant	Supported
H11	Young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) mediates the relationship between social media effort expectancy (SMEE) and voters' choice.	0.73	0.46	Not significant	Not supported
H12	Young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) mediates the relationship between social media social influence (SMSI) and voters' choice.	3.21	0.00	Significant	Supported
H13	Young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) mediates the relationship between social media facilitating conditions (SMFC) and voters' choice.	0.13	0.90	Not significant	Not supported
H14	Young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) mediates the relationship between social media hedonic motivation (SMHM) and voters' choice.	3.61	0.00	Significant	Supported
H15	Young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) mediates the relationship between social media habit (SMH) and voters' choice.	0.32	.75	Not significant	Not supported
Moderating effects					

H16	Experience will moderate the effect of social media facilitating conditions (SMFC) towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI).	1.31	0.19	Not significant	Not Supported
H17	Experience will moderate the effect of social media hedonic motivation (SMHM) towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI).	0.72	0.47	Not significant	Not Supported
H18	Experience will moderate the effect of social media habit (SMH) towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI).	2.34	0.02	Significant	Supported
H19	Experience will moderate the effect of social media habit (SMH) on voters' choice.	0.95	0.34	Not Significant	Not Supported
H20	Experience will moderate the effect of young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) on voters' choice.	0.67	0.51	Not significant	Not Supported
Model-level Hypothesis					
H21	The integrated Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) and and Newman & Sheth's Model of Primary Voter Behaviour demonstrates explanatory and predictive power for voter choice.			R ² VC: 0.005 → 0.357 Q ² VC: 0.005 → 0.342 SRMR: 0.074 → 0.073	Significant Supported

Note. H1–H20 were tested using path coefficients (β , t, p) from bootstrapping. H21 was evaluated using model-level indices (R^2 , Q^2 predict, SRMR, NFI) by comparing the baseline UTAUT2 model with the integrated UTAUT2 + Model of Primary Voter Behaviour.

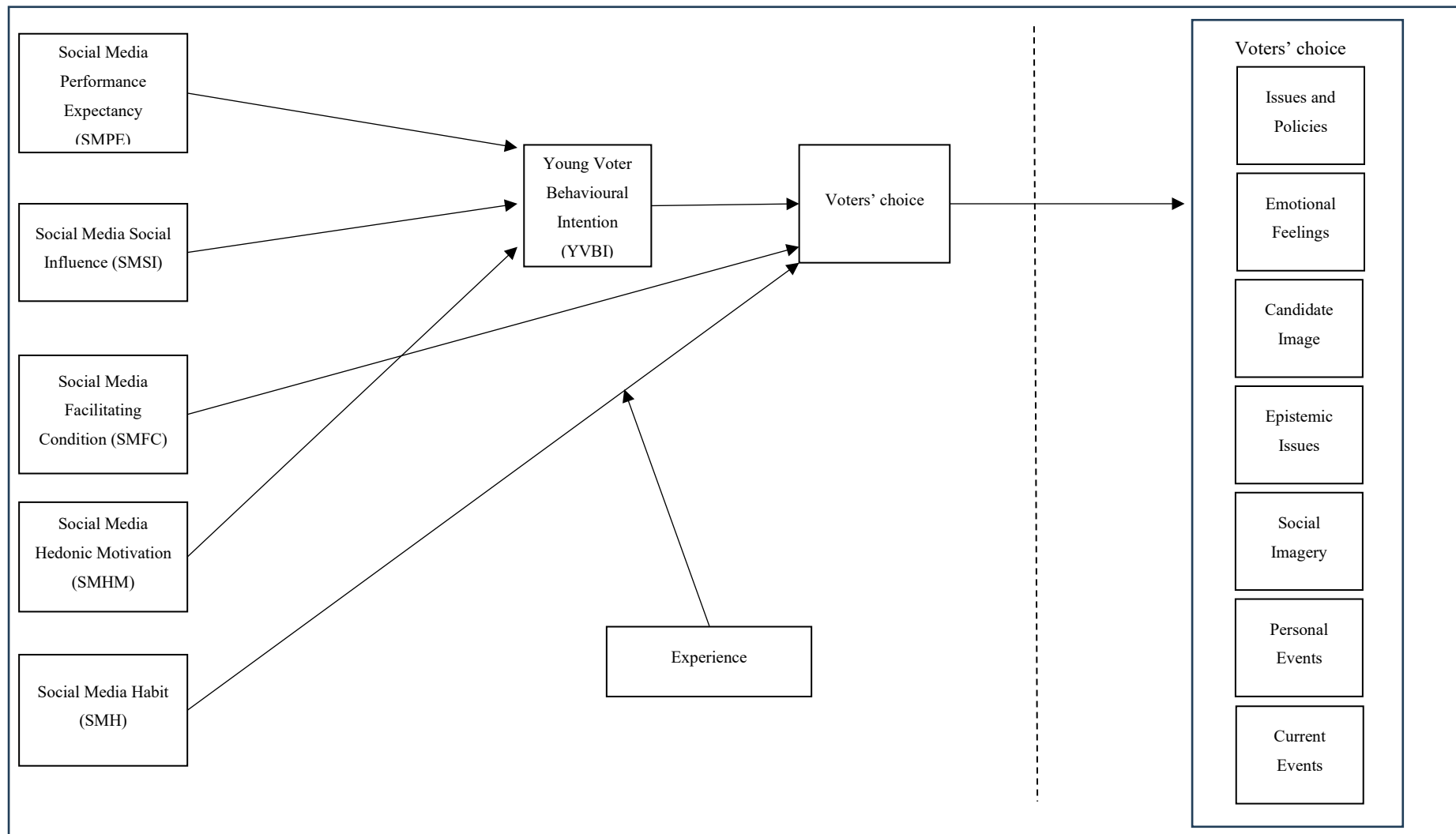


Figure 4.7 Final Structural Model

4.14 Summary of Results

This chapter presents the results of hypothesis testing based on the integrated Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) and Newman and Sheth's (1985) voter behaviour framework. The analysis reveals direct, mediating, moderating, and model-level effects that shape young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) and voting choice (VC).

Three (3) Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) constructs, such as performance expectancy (H1, $t = 4.24$, $p < .001$), social influence (H3, $t = 6.27$, $p < .001$), and hedonic motivation (H5, $t = 7.83$, $p < .001$) significantly predict YVBI, confirming their central role in digital political participation. Effort expectancy (H2), facilitating conditions (H4), and habit (H6) do not exert a significant influence on YVBI. In contrast, facilitating conditions (H7, $t = 7.06$, $p < .001$) and habit (H8, $t = 4.32$, $p < .001$) show direct positive effects on VC. YVBI also strongly predicts VC (H9, $t = 4.05$, $p < .001$), reinforcing its role as a proximal determinant of voting behaviour.

Mediation analysis confirms that YVBI mediates the relationships between performance expectancy (SMPE; H10, $t = 2.90$, $p < .001$), social influence (SMSI; H12, $t = 3.21$, $p < .001$), and hedonic motivation (SMHM; H14, $t = 3.61$, $p < .001$) with VC. These findings establish YVBI as a behavioural conduit linking digital motivations to electoral outcomes. Mediations involving effort expectancy (SMEE; H11), facilitating conditions (SMFC; H13), and habit (SMH; H15) are not supported, indicating that their influence bypasses intention and operates through direct pathways.

Moderation analysis identifies one significant interaction: experience strengthens the relationship between habit and YVBI (H18, $t = 2.34$, $p = .02$). Other moderation hypotheses (H16, H17, H19, H20) do not yield significant results.

Model-level evaluation confirms that the integrated framework enhances explanatory and predictive power. The R^2 for VC increases from 0.005 to 0.357, and Q^2 rises from 0.005 to 0.342. Fit indices remain within acceptable thresholds (SRMR = 0.073), validating the model's structural integrity.

These findings demonstrate that young voters' engagement with social media, driven by perceived usefulness, social influence, and enjoyment, translates into behavioural intention, which subsequently predicts voting choice. Constructs such as facilitating conditions and habit directly influence voting, suggesting that infrastructural

support and routinised behaviour operate independently of intention. The results affirm the model's dual-pathway structure, integrating reflective and automatic mechanisms to explain young voters' political behaviour.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses and interprets the findings presented in Chapter 4, situating them within the broader academic discourse on social media, political participation, and voter behaviour. In this chapter, the researcher discusses the main findings from the research, where applicable, and links them to the literature review and the research outcomes. All research questions were subsequently answered, and the achievement of the research objectives was finally determined. The research explored the behavioural intentions of young voters in Selangor, Malaysia, to use social media for political participation, and the influence of these intentions on voting choices. Guided by the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) framework, the research addressed key questions on factors such as social media facilitating conditions, hedonic motivation, and behavioural intention, among others.

More importantly, the findings provided empirical validation and refinement of the integrated UTAUT2–Newman and Sheth framework. Specifically, the results demonstrated that while utilitarian constructs (e.g., performance expectancy) remain relevant, affective and social mechanisms (e.g., hedonic motivation and social influence) exert a stronger influence on behavioural intention. This suggests a contextual shift in technology acceptance within political communication, where engagement is driven less by efficiency and more by experiential and relational factors.

The analysis is grounded in the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) and the Model of Primary Voter Behaviour (Newman & Sheth, 1985), which provided the theoretical foundation for this research. These frameworks were instrumental in exploring how constructs such as social media performance expectancy, effort expectancy, facilitating conditions, social influence, hedonic motivation, and habit impact young voters' political participation. The findings revealed significant insights. Young voters demonstrated high levels of social media acceptance, with performance expectancy and effort expectancy emerging as critical determinants. Behavioural intention was moderately high, indicating a willingness to engage politically through social media, though variations highlighted differing levels

of commitment. Facilitating conditions and hedonic motivation also played pivotal roles, while candidate attributes such as honesty, trustworthiness, and leadership significantly influenced voter choice. Furthermore, emotional factors such as responsibility and patriotism were prominent, indicating the interplay between rational and affective drivers in voting behaviour.

These findings were significant for understanding how the intersection of technology and political communication shapes voter behaviour. They underscore the potential of social media as a platform for civic engagement while also highlighting the nuanced challenges of fostering sustained, meaningful participation. This research contributes to the broader discourse on digital democracy and political mobilisation by integrating theoretical frameworks with empirical evidence.

5.2 H1: Social Media Performance Expectancy (SMPE) has a significant positive effect towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI)

Hypothesis 1 proposed that social media performance expectancy (SMPE) significantly influences young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI). The findings of this research indicate that SMPE has a statistically significant positive effect on young voters' behavioural intention ($\beta = 0.21$, $t = 4.24$, $p < 0.01$). These results support Hypothesis 1, suggesting that young voters are more likely to engage with social media when they perceive its expected performance as beneficial. Given that the p-value falls below the conventional threshold of 0.05, the findings further indicate that young voters view social media as an efficient, accessible, and practical tool for acquiring political information. Moreover, the research suggests that young voters' political participation is likely to increase when social media is perceived as an effective means for information dissemination and engagement.

Support for Hypothesis 1 becomes evident when examining respondents' everyday experiences with social media. Young voters in this research use social media regularly, integrating it seamlessly into their daily routines. These platforms serve as more than tools for entertainment or social interaction. They served as practical, efficient sources of political news and information. Years of consistent use have made respondents highly adept at navigating social media's features and discerning valuable content, fostering a strong sense of trust and confidence in utilising these platforms for

more purposeful activities, such as staying informed about political issues or participating in public discourse.

The participants, primarily in their early twenties, belong to a generation immersed in a digital environment. As digital natives, they exhibit a high level of proficiency in using technology to meet their informational needs swiftly and effectively. Their educational background equips them to engage critically with political content, favouring platforms that offer a broad range of perspectives with minimal effort. These realities reinforce performance expectancy's role as a strong predictor of social media engagement in political contexts.

These findings align with the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), particularly its emphasis on performance expectancy. Venkatesh et al. (2016) identify performance expectancy as one of the strongest predictors of behavioural intention in technology adoption. Young voters view social media as a tool that enhances and facilitates their political participation within the political communication landscape. However, this research demonstrates that performance expectancy is not the strongest predictor of behavioural intention.

The results reinforce existing research on social media's impact on young voters' attitudes and intentions. Aljaafreh (2021) establish that performance expectancy directly influences students' use of social networks for academic purposes in Jordanian universities. The expansion of digital platforms worldwide has provided students with diverse sources of information, enabling deeper engagement with educational content. Akinyetun (2022) demonstrates that social media increases political efficacy and deepens political knowledge, leading to higher levels of political participation. Dash (2024) integrates the theory of planned behaviour into research on social media use, revealing that favourable attitudes toward political messages significantly increase voters' likelihood of participating in politics. Users who recognise social media as an effective tool for political participation take active steps in electoral processes.

Omotayo and Folorunso (2020) highlight the role of social networks in facilitating political participation through social media, demonstrating that both performance expectancy and peer engagement motivate political involvement. Agbesi (2020) reinforces this relationship by identifying performance expectancy as a strong predictor of internet voting adoption among young voters in Ghana. The perceived effectiveness of social media fosters political participation through digital platforms.

Hassan et al. (2021) provide empirical evidence that social media use and political efficacy shape voting decisions among first-time voters. Individuals who believe that social media increases political awareness express stronger voting intentions, affirming the direct influence of performance expectancy on behavioural intention. Bañales et al. (2020) expand on this by showing that critical reflections on social inequality mediate the relationship between social media engagement and voting behaviour. These findings highlight the complexities of digital engagement and affirm the importance of performance expectancy in connecting personal social awareness with political action.

5.3 H2: Social Media Effort Expectancy (SMEE) has a significant effect towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI)

Hypothesis 2 posits that Social Media Effort Expectancy (SMEE) significantly influences young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI). Young voters who perceive a technology as simple to use demonstrate a higher level of acceptance. This research examined whether young voters considered social media an easy-to-use platform for political participation, which could encourage its adoption for engagement. However, the findings revealed that Social Media Effort Expectancy does not exert a significant positive effect on young voters' behavioural intention. The path coefficient ($\beta = -0.03$, $t = 0.74$, $p > 0.01$) indicated that this relationship is not statistically significant.

Several patterns in the results illustrate why SMEE does not significantly affect YVBI in this context. The sample consisted of individuals with extensive experience in social media, engaging with it daily, and navigating platforms effortlessly. Their digital proficiency renders effort expectancy irrelevant in shaping behavioural intentions. Most respondents were young adults with higher education backgrounds, seamlessly integrating social media into their communication and daily routines. Platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, X, and Facebook prioritised intuitive interfaces, enabling fluid interaction without requiring users to assess the effort involved. Political and informational engagement occurs naturally within established habits, eliminating cognitive considerations of effort.

These findings directly challenged the assumptions of the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), which designated effort expectancy as a key predictor of behavioural intention in technology adoption (Venkatesh et al., 2016).

Effort expectancy, defined as the ease of using a system or technology, plays a significant role in adoption decisions, particularly for emerging technologies. However, the results demonstrate that effort expectancy does not influence young voters' behavioural intention toward social media. As a widely adopted and deeply integrated technology in their daily routines, social media does not require additional cognitive effort to engage with. High familiarity and proficiency with these platforms render ease of use a less decisive factor in political participation, reinforcing the idea that other motivational forces shape young voters' engagement with political content.

The hypothesis that effort expectancy significantly affects behavioural intention toward using social media for political participation, particularly voting, lacks strong empirical support in recent studies. Several scholarly investigations report non-significant relationships, indicating that the ease of use associated with social media does not directly influence users' intentions to engage politically.

Atsbeha and Wodaje (2024) conducted cross-sectional research that challenges the presumed influence of effort expectancy on behavioural intentions. Their findings demonstrate that healthcare professionals in Gondar perceive social media as inherently easy to use, thereby eliminating the need to consider effort expectancy as a motivational factor. This observation aligns with studies in non-political contexts, suggesting that effort expectancy is of little relevance to users already proficient with social media tools.

Puriwat and Tripopsakul (2021) reinforced this perspective, showing that while performance expectancy positively influences behavioural intention to use social media in business settings, effort expectancy does not have the same impact. Once users have integrated a platform into their routine, ease of use ceases to be a determining factor in their engagement decisions. Tan (2022) further establishes that social media does not effectively enhance political confidence or voting intentions among young voters. These findings indicate that although social media facilitates information dissemination, its usability does not directly translate into increased political participation. This evidence challenged the role of effort expectancy as a predictor of political participation.

Mensah (2020) supported this conclusion by demonstrating that effort expectancy does not play a decisive role in shaping behavioural intention. Within the framework of the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology, citizen trust emerges as a stronger determinant of voter adoption than effort expectancy. This

highlights a complex interplay of motivational factors, shifting the emphasis away from usability. Fischer (2023) expanded on this argument by analysing broader contextual influences on social media adoption. Structural weaknesses within political parties and demographic variations contribute to the slow uptake of digital campaigning methods, further diminishing the impact of effort expectancy on political participation.

5.4 H3: Social media social influence (SMSI) has a significant positive effect towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI).

Hypothesis 3 proposes that social media social influence (SMSI) has a significant positive effect on young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) to engage in political participation through social media. The structural model results confirmed this hypothesis, with a standardised regression coefficient (β) of 0.34, $t = 6.27$, and $p < 0.01$. Young voters who experience stronger social influence from their peers and social media exhibit a stronger intention to engage in political activities online, underscoring the crucial role of social media platforms in shaping political behaviour.

The confirmation of Hypothesis 3 is supported by both the statistical findings and the socio-demographic profile of the respondents. The high level of significance indicated that young voters are profoundly influenced by the norms and expectations within their online networks. Participants belong to a generation that relies on social media not only for information but also for social validation, a sense of community, and peer interaction. These platforms served as dynamic spaces where political ideas, causes, and behaviours are modelled, shared, and endorsed by peers, influencers, and community leaders. Exposure to politically engaged peers fosters active participation in discussions, candidate endorsements, and digital campaigns.

Social influence exerts a particularly strong impact on younger users, who are highly responsive to peer norms and online trends. The demographic composition of the sample is primarily young, university-educated, and digitally experienced, reflecting a population attuned to social cues in online environments and inclined to internalise them as motivations for political action. Frequent engagement with social media ensures continuous exposure to politically active peers and digital content, amplifying the role of social influence in shaping electoral participation.

This significant relationship between SMSI and YVBI aligned with the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), which identified social

influence as a key factor shaping behavioural intention (Venkatesh et al., 2016). Peer influence and social networks motivate young voters to participate in political discourse and activities on social media. Social influence refers to the pressure from family, friends, and community members to adopt new technologies and engage in collective behaviours. Politically engaged young voters with strong social connections actively utilise online platforms, thereby reinforcing their participation in political discussions and decision-making processes.

Investigating the influence of social media on political participation, particularly voting, reveals a significant positive effect on behavioural intentions. Research indicates that social media is a powerful tool for enhancing civic engagement by increasing communication and information sharing among users. Bogale and Kibret (2023) showed that adolescents use social media to share civic messages, thereby fostering community connectedness and civic competence, which in turn enhances their intentions to participate in political activities such as voting. These findings align with Arabani et al. (2022), who assert that positive sentiments towards social networking significantly influence young voters' attitudes and intentions to vote. Their work emphasises that when individuals perceive social media as influential, it directly correlates with their voting behaviour and civic involvement.

Moreover, social media provides an accessible platform to enhance political knowledge and engagement among young voters, thereby influencing their voting intentions. Bamidele et al. highlight how social media's unrestricted access to political information can effectively mobilise voters, enabling them to evaluate candidates without traditional media gatekeeping (Bamidele et al., 2024). Tan (2020) examined how social media platforms shape young voters' political attitudes and voting behaviour, underscoring their role in political transitions.

Additionally, research by Naidu et al. found that increased social media use can lead to higher levels of political participation by enabling voters to engage more deeply with party politics and influencing their voting preferences (Naidu et al., 2023). Similarly, Hassan et al. found that heightened social media usage correlates with increased political efficacy, thereby influencing the voting decisions of new voters (Hassan et al., 2021). This is further emphasised by Marijan and Sahab (2020), who indicate that social media influences beginner voters more than traditional media outlets, suggesting a shift in how information affects voter behaviour in contemporary democracies.

Friche et al. (2020) contextualised this by discussing how access to diverse media influences political attitudes and enhances democratic processes, highlighting the necessity of social media in modern voter mobilisation efforts. By examining these interconnections, it is evident that a robust relationship exists between social media usage and increased behavioural intentions to participate in political activities such as voting.

In summary, extensive research supports the conclusion that social media has a significant positive effect on individuals' behavioural intentions to participate in politics. This influence encompasses increased civic engagement, improved political knowledge, and greater confidence in voting, ultimately supporting the hypothesis that social influence positively affects the use of social media for political participation. These findings emphasise that social media serves as a powerful conduit for political participation among young voters. The digital landscape does not merely facilitate access to political information but actively fosters participation through peer interactions and social validation. The strong statistical support for SMSI underscores the transformative potential of online networks in mobilising young voters and shaping contemporary political discourse.

5.5 H4: Social media facilitating conditions (SMFC) have a significant positive effect towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI).

Hypothesis 4 (H4) posited that social media facilitating conditions (SMFC) have a significant positive effect towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI). However, the hypothesis was not supported by the data. The structural model yielded a standardised coefficient of $\beta = -0.01$, $t = 0.13$ and a p -value > 0.05 ($p = 0.90$), indicating no statistically significant effect. The absence of statistical significance indicates that facilitating conditions do not influence young voters' intention to use social media for political participation. These findings suggest that young voters already possess the necessary resources and technical proficiency to navigate social media platforms, making external facilitating conditions less relevant in shaping their political participation.

The data from the sample provides a clear explanation for the lack of effect observed. Most participants are young adults who have grown up in a digital environment and possess extensive experience using social media. Their frequent

engagement and long-term familiarity confirm that they have the infrastructure, skills, and digital literacy to navigate social media independently. Access and usability function as baseline conditions rather than barriers, eliminating the need for external support. Motivational and social influences, including perceived usefulness and peer influence, shape their behaviour.

In political communication, interventions that seek to increase young voters' engagement through digital platforms are more effective when they emphasise content relevance, social interaction, and motivational appeal rather than infrastructure or technical support. Social media Facilitating Conditions (SMFC) play a critical role for less-experienced or older populations, but exert minimal influence on digitally fluent young voters who navigate online environments with a high degree of autonomy. These findings reinforce the evolving dynamics of digital participation, shifting focus from external technological support to intrinsic and social drivers of political participation.

These findings challenged the applicability of the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology in explaining young voters' behavioural intentions to use social media for political participation. Facilitating conditions were not a primary determinant of social media adoption among young voters. The widespread use of digital platforms suggests that access to technology and technical support play a minimal role in shaping political participation. Familiarity and frequent usage diminished the relevance of external support structures.

Research reinforced these conclusions, demonstrating that facilitating conditions hold limited influence in contexts where users already possess proficiency in digital tools. Political participation through social media depended more on motivational drivers than on the availability of supportive infrastructure. Several studies identify nuanced relationships between social media use and political participation. While social media provides avenues for disseminating political information, it does not consistently translate into voting behaviour. Emotional narratives mobilised through social media resonate with young voters but often fail to sustain long-term political participation.

Empirical evidence does not uniformly support the hypothesis that facilitating conditions enhance political participation through social media. Studies suggest that anticipated benefits and accessibility do not always lead to increased political participation. Akinyetun (2022) examines political efficacy in Nigeria and finds that access to social media does not directly increase political participation. Political

orientation and social networks play a stronger role in shaping engagement. Ida et al. (2020) present similar conclusions in a comparative analysis of Indonesia and Pakistan, demonstrating that while social media facilitates discussion, it does not inherently foster activism.

Wang (2023) explores civic participation and finds that while social media encourages discourse, it often fails to convert engagement into voting behaviour. Social and cultural factors shape political participation more than technological accessibility. Kim and Lee (2021) investigate how different types of social media influence political involvement, showing that information-driven social media engagement correlates with online participation but does not consistently translate into offline action. Mande et al. (2022) highlight that political efficacy moderates the relationship between social media use and political participation, emphasising that being in an information-rich environment does not guarantee involvement.

Further research examines the complexities of social media dynamics, including misinformation and polarisation, which complicate the relationship between facilitating conditions and actual political participation (Sjoraida et al., 2024). Young voters view social media as an embedded aspect of daily life, requiring minimal external facilitation. Boulianne (2020) confirms this trend in a meta-analysis, demonstrating that motivation and identity-based factors, rather than access or usability, predict digital political participation.

These findings shift focus from technological facilitation to intrinsic and social drivers of political participation. Interventions designed to increase young voters' political involvement through social media are more effective when they emphasise content relevance, social interaction, and motivational appeal rather than infrastructure or technical support.

The descriptive data on social media Facilitating Conditions (SMFC) likely indicate neutral or moderate agreement, suggesting that while social media tools are accessible, they do not serve as critical enablers of political action. Some studies demonstrate that social media enhances political efficacy and increases the intention to vote, but others find its actual impact on political participation to be limited. Educated young individuals report a declining interest in civic engagement through social media, revealing a disconnect between online activity and meaningful voting intentions (Hassan et al., 2021). This disconnect is further reinforced by young voters' preference for using social media for entertainment and social interaction rather than for substantial

political discourse (Barati, 2023). Mixed findings underscore broader implications for young voters' engagement and decision-making. Some researchers argue that social media contributes to voter apathy, particularly by reducing face-to-face interactions, though the extent of this effect varies (Noori et al., 2023).

This research established no significant relationship between Social Media Facilitating Conditions and young voters' behavioural intention. Facilitating conditions do not function as key drivers of political participation among digital natives. These findings challenged the assumption that providing access to social media directly translates into increased political participation. Engagement is shaped by individual motivations, political interests, and broader sociopolitical dynamics rather than external facilitating conditions.

The reviewed literature confirms that, while social media serves as a platform for political discourse, its connection to facilitating conditions and to explicit voting intentions is not robust. A more nuanced understanding of political participation mechanisms in the digital age is necessary. Research indicates that social media influences political participation, but the nature of this influence depends on psychological, social, and contextual factors rather than the mere availability of digital resources.

5.6 H5: Social media hedonic motivation (SMHM) has a significant positive effect towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI).

Hypothesis 5 states that social media hedonic motivation (SMHM) has a significant positive effect towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI). The results support this hypothesis, with a path coefficient $\beta = 0.39$, $t = 7.83$, and $p < 0.01$, indicating a moderate yet statistically significant effect. Affective gratifications and emotional engagement emerge as critical components in shaping political behaviour among digital-native young voters. The findings establish that SMHM significantly enhances young voters' behavioural intention to engage in political participation. Enjoyment and pleasure derived from social media interactions strengthen user engagement and increase participation. Hedonic motivation functions as a driving force, fostering sustained involvement in political discussions and digital activism. Young voters integrate political content into their social media experience when the platform delivers entertainment and personal satisfaction.

The results confirm the strong influence of hedonic motivation on young voters' behavioural intention. Respondents belong to the post-millennial generation, characterised by a strong affinity for entertainment-oriented media. Many engage with social media for several hours daily, reinforcing its dual role as both an information channel and a space for leisure and emotional engagement. With extensive experience using social media, respondents demonstrate a high level of familiarity and emotional investment in these platforms.

Prolonged, immersive use increases the likelihood of encountering political content in enjoyable formats such as memes, TikTok videos, livestreams, and Instagram Reels. This exposure fosters positive reception and reinforces the role of hedonic motivation in shaping political participation. Young voters actively interact with digital content when it aligns with their entertainment-driven media habits, making enjoyment a key factor in sustaining political participation through social media.

These findings align with the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2), which posits hedonic motivation as a critical determinant of behavioural intention in voluntary and pleasure-driven contexts, such as social media use (Venkatesh et al., 2012). Hedonic motivation refers to the enjoyment or pleasure derived from using a technology, and its strong relationship with behavioural intention suggests that young voters are motivated to engage with social media for political purposes when they find the experience enjoyable and emotionally satisfying.

Research highlights the significant role of hedonic motivation in shaping young voters' political participation through social media. Engaging content and interactive features enhance affective gratification, reinforcing the appeal of political participation in digital spaces (Dwivedi et al., 2021). The integration of politics into entertaining, relatable formats reduces cognitive effort and increases emotional engagement, thereby making participation more accessible (Belcastro et al., 2022).

Recent empirical research confirms that entertainment-driven engagement significantly influences political participation among young voters. Abid and Harrigan (2020) demonstrate that social media activities rooted in enjoyment and relational bonding resonate more strongly with young voters than traditional civic duty appeals. Hedonic motivation emerges as a central driver of behavioural intention, particularly when political content is embedded in entertaining, socially interactive formats. Akinyetun (2022) reinforces this by showing that pleasurable digital experiences

increase political efficacy and participation among Nigerian youth, highlighting social media's role in cultivating political consciousness through engaging content.

Waeterloos et al. (2021) extend this understanding by identifying behavioural types such as expressive and follower engagement that reflect hedonic participation patterns. These behaviours illustrate how social media functions as a dual-purpose space, simultaneously satisfying entertainment needs and facilitating political discourse. The integration of enjoyment and political messaging strengthens young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI), especially when platforms support interactive, personalised content delivery.

Lee et al. (2024) emphasise that hedonic motivation also mitigates the psychological discomfort associated with political disagreement. Engaging political content on social media alleviates tension and fosters emotional resilience, enabling users to navigate contentious discourse without disengaging. This buffering effect enhances sustained political involvement and reinforces the value of hedonic design in digital political communication.

Hedonic motivation drives young voters to engage with political content when social media interactions provide satisfaction and pleasure. Enjoyable social media experiences increase political participation, reinforcing the accessibility and appeal of the voting process (Gardikiotis et al., 2020). Political participation becomes more effective when platforms integrate entertainment-driven elements that resonate with user preferences (Pratika, 2020). Findings confirm that motivations shaping online behaviours influence political participation, encouraging users to engage in elections (Traymbak et al., 2022).

Despite varying perspectives, hedonic motivation consistently emerges as a powerful driver of political participation among young voters. Studies acknowledge that, while hedonic motivation does not always sustain long-term engagement in some contexts (Mardjo, 2020; Kim et al., 2020), it remains significant in promoting voting intentions. Young voters actively engage with interactive, entertaining social media environments, reinforcing the importance of affective engagement in political participation.

These findings establish hedonic motivation as a central factor in shaping young voters' intention to use social media for political participation, particularly in the context of voting. Understanding how enjoyment influences digital political

participation is essential for designing effective mobilisation strategies that resonate with younger demographics.

5.7 H6: Social media habit (SMH) has a significant positive effect towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI).

Hypothesis 6 states that social media habit (SMH) has a significant positive effect towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI). The results do not support this hypothesis. The structural model yielded a standardised coefficient of $\beta = 0.01$, $t = 0.32$, $p > 0.05$ ($p=0.75$), confirming the absence of statistical significance. The findings demonstrate that habitual use of social media does not translate into increased political participation among young voters. Social media functions as a platform for political discourse and information dissemination, but routine engagement does not necessarily drive political participation.

A social media habit refers to the automatic, repetitive use of digital platforms, often occurring without conscious deliberation. Young voters, as digital natives, incorporate social media into their daily lives, but habitual usage does not appear to influence their intention to engage politically. The results challenge assumptions about the relationship between social media usage patterns and political behaviour, suggesting that intentional participation is shaped by other motivational and contextual factors rather than routine exposure to digital content.

Political participation does not occur passively through habitual scrolling. Engagement requires intention, motivation, and a trigger that prompts users to shift from consumption to action. Young voters routinely check their social media feeds, but this behaviour does not guarantee interaction with political content or participation in political discussions or campaigns. Habitual use does not equate to meaningful engagement. The findings challenge the assumption that frequent social media use naturally translates into political participation.

Intentional efforts are necessary to foster deeper digital political involvement. Educational programs, political socialisation, and strategic engagement strategies play a crucial role in encouraging young voters to participate actively rather than passively consume information. Being present in digital spaces does not equate to political activism. Social media offers exposure to political discourse, but engagement depends on motivational factors beyond habitual usage.

This finding diverged from expectations derived from the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2), which posits habit as a strong predictor of behavioural intention in technology use (Venkatesh et al., 2012). In consumer behaviour contexts, habit often signifies behavioural automaticity formed through repeated past behaviour, leading to consistent future use. However, the lack of significance in the political context points to important boundary conditions in applying Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) to digital political communication and civic engagement.

The hypothesis that social media habits influence behavioural intention to participate in online political activities is not consistently supported by existing research. Studies suggest that habitual social media use does not directly enhance political participation among young voters. While routine interaction with digital platforms creates exposure to political content, it does not necessarily translate into meaningful participation.

Gardikiotis et al. (2020) establish that habitual social media use served as a routine backdrop to participation but does not strongly predict voting intentions. Political motives and efficacy shape engagement more significantly than habitual patterns. Homssi et al. (2022) reinforce this perspective, demonstrating that political participation through social media is driven by content relevance and strategic political communication rather than habitual usage alone. Lundberg and Abdelzadeh (2025) highlight that adolescents' political intentions stem from broader motivational and contextual factors rather than routine social media behaviours.

Tareen and Adnan (2021) confirm that increased social media use does not automatically result in electoral participation. While exposure to political discourse is common, engagement requires more than habitual interaction. Wang (2023) further supports this, indicating that social media routines contribute to overall engagement but do not strongly predict voting behaviour. Many users engage with social media primarily for entertainment, limiting its effectiveness as a motivator for civic action.

Zain and Ciccarelli (2023) examine the negative outcomes of habitual media consumption in political contexts, demonstrating that misinformation can deter engagement despite frequent exposure. Orben et al. (2020) observe that routine digital habits often correlate with passive browsing rather than active participation in political discourse. Social media habits developed for entertainment or communication may not align with goal-oriented political actions.

The findings suggest that political campaigns and organisations should not rely solely on habitual social media use to predict engagement. More influential factors, such as hedonic motivation, social influence, and performance expectancy, shape political participation more effectively. Habitual exposure to political content can increase awareness, but its impact depends on contextual interactions. Future research can explore whether social media habits interact with other variables, such as content relevance or peer influence, to influence behavioural intention.

This research finds no significant relationship between social media habits and young voters' behavioural intention, confirming that habits do not serve as a direct driver of political participation in this context. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of digital political behaviour and highlight the need for further research into the mechanisms that shape political participation. While routine social media use may reinforce exposure, it does not significantly elevate voting intentions. Political participation is mediated by factors such as political motives, content quality, and perceptions of efficacy, complicating assumptions about habitual participation as a catalyst for electoral involvement.

5.8 H7: Social media facilitating conditions (SMFC) has a significant positive effect on voters' choice.

Hypothesis 7 states that social media facilitating conditions (SMFC) have a significant positive effect on voters' choice. These conditions encompass the availability of technological and informational resources that support the use of social media for political participation. The results confirm this hypothesis, with the structural model demonstrating a moderate and statistically significant effect ($\beta = 0.35$, $t = 7.06$, $p < .001$). When voters perceive sufficient access, support, and digital literacy, their ability and willingness to make informed electoral decisions strengthen.

The relationship between SMFC and young voters' behavioural intentions reflects the evolving nature of electoral engagement. Social media shapes how young voters acquire information, evaluate political content, and participate in discourse. Empirical evidence affirms that access to digital tools and credible political information enhances decision-making. The respondent profile reinforces this connection. Most participants report regular social media use, extensive experience with multiple platforms, and university-level education, indicating high levels of digital and political

literacy. The majority are registered and previously active voters, suggesting a politically engaged demographic. These characteristics illustrate how SMFC translate into meaningful electoral influence among digitally fluent and civically aware individuals.

These findings align with the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), which identifies facilitating conditions as key determinants of technology adoption (Venkatesh et al., 2016). In this context, SMFC reflect the ease with which voters access and utilise social media for political purposes. Research confirms that social media is a primary source of political information for first-time voters. Facilitating conditions such as stable internet connectivity, intuitive interfaces, and access to trustworthy content enhance users' ability to process political information and make informed choices (Dwivedi et al., 2019). The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) model highlights several key variables, including facilitating conditions, which show a significant positive relationship with behavioural intention to adopt technology, including social media platforms in voting contexts (Puriwat & Tripopsakul, 2021; Abdat, 2020).

Integrating these results with Newman and Sheth's (1985) Model of Primary Voter Behaviour highlights how facilitating conditions intersect meaningfully with informational processing components such as issues and policies, candidate image, and current events. It emphasises emotional connections and social influences in shaping primary voter behaviour and offers a nuanced perspective on social media's role in electoral engagement. The ease and effectiveness of social media platforms empower young voters to navigate complex political information, supporting their decision-making. Thus, facilitating conditions not only simplify technological interactions but also substantively enhance voter competence in navigating political content, confirming their critical role in shaping voter choices in a digital democracy landscape.

Social media platforms facilitate emotional resonance by enabling interactions that strengthen perceived group identity and solidarity. Kumari et al. (2022) highlighted how social networking enhances the acculturation process, demonstrating that digital communication fosters a sense of belonging essential during political cycles. Emotional engagement becomes particularly salient when voters relate to candidates through social media content that reflects shared values, lived experiences, and community concerns. Arkorful et al. (2020) emphasised that such emotional connections exert a strong influence on voter perceptions and electoral choices. These insights affirm the centrality

of social media in reinforcing interpersonal and collective bonds that align with the affective and social dimensions of voter decision-making.

Social media's influence on voter behaviour stems from its interactive nature. Frequent use of platforms like Twitter and Facebook enables young voters to engage in political discussions and mobilisation efforts. Studies affirmed that young voters participate in both online and offline political activities, using social media as a tool for civic engagement (Omotayo & Folorunso, 2020). Political parties that implement targeted digital campaigns further amplify this engagement by shaping voter perceptions and encouraging participation (Yussif et al., 2024). Research indicated that when supported by adequate facilitating conditions, such as access to technology, user training, and operational support, voters are more likely to utilise social media effectively for information gathering and decision-making during elections (Almasi et al., 2023).

Facilitating conditions directly influence voters' confidence in engaging with social media for political purposes. These structural and environmental supports work in tandem with social influence and performance expectancy, creating a more enabling ecosystem for digital political participation. Abdat (2020) emphasised that such conditions empower individuals by reinforcing their belief in the usability and relevance of social platforms for civic engagement. Almasi et al. (2023) further supported this by demonstrating that a supportive technological environment enhances users' ability to access political information efficiently across diverse social groups. When voters perceive that adequate infrastructure, skills, and institutional backing are available, they actively seek information about candidates and political issues. This process contributes to more informed decision-making and fosters deeper political involvement through digital means.

Technological affordances also play a pivotal role in political communication. Treem and Leonardi (2020) emphasise that features such as interactivity, ease of sharing, and accessibility empower users to engage with political content more effectively. These affordances influence behavioural intentions, as individuals who actively engage with political content on social platforms are more likely to participate in elections (Ahadiyah et al., 2024). Social media thus facilitates turnout among groups that may otherwise feel excluded from traditional political processes (Dankwah & Mensah, 2021). Effective digital strategies resonate with young voters, increasing receptivity to political messaging (Bassey et al., 2024).

Beyond information dissemination, social media fosters a sense of political community. Platforms enable dialogue around political issues, promoting collective efficacy and empowerment as users engage with like-minded peers (Bariguna et al., 2021). This dynamic contributes to the development of political consciousness and sustained participation among youth (Baldeh, 2019).

These findings carry practical implications. Policymakers, campaign strategists, and platform developers must prioritise environments that support seamless access to political content. Expanding internet infrastructure and designing user-friendly platforms enhance voters' ability to evaluate political information. Campaigns that optimised content for mobile access and addressed accessibility barriers, including language and disability considerations, extend the reach of political messaging (Pew Research Centre, 2021).

Credible content curation also strengthens SMFC. Transparent moderation practices and digital literacy initiatives improve voters' ability to discern reliable information. These efforts mitigate the risks of misinformation and reinforce informed decision-making. The interactive nature of social media further democratises political participation by enabling two-way communication and amplifying alternative voices and grassroots movements (Mathew et al., 2023).

The convergence of facilitating conditions, the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) model, and Newman and Sheth's (1985) framework demonstrates social media's capacity to empower voters through accessible, supportive, and emotionally resonant digital environments. Facilitating conditions enhance the effectiveness of social influence and performance expectancy by reinforcing users' confidence in navigating social media as a tool for political participation. When these structural and informational supports are present, voters engage more actively with political content, form stronger candidate evaluations, and make more informed electoral decisions. This synthesis affirms that cultivating robust facilitating conditions within digital platforms advances democratic participation by fostering an informed and participatory electorate.

5.9 H8: Social media habit (SMH) has a significant positive effect towards voters' choice.

Hypothesis 8 proposed that social media habit (SMH) has a significant positive effect towards voters' choice. The analysis demonstrates that the hypothesis was supported. This was evidenced by the path coefficient ($\beta = 0.21$), indicating a moderate yet statistically significant relationship ($t = 4.32$, $p < .001$). Although the effect size is modest, it underscores a meaningful link between habitual platform use and political decision-making among voters. This outcome suggests that habitual social media engagement significantly influences young voters' voting decisions.

This result reflects a deeper, more subtle influence of digital routines on political behaviour. As individuals incorporate social media into their daily routines, these platforms increasingly shape the context in which political preferences develop. The habitual nature of engagement embeds social media into the cognitive and social processes that inform political attitudes. This integration transforms social media from a passive information source into an active environment where political identities are negotiated, reinforced, and expressed. The continuous exposure to curated content, peer interactions, and algorithmically tailored information contributes to the normalization of specific political narratives, thereby influencing how individuals interpret political events and align with particular ideologies. This influence is not always conscious or intentional, which makes it especially powerful. The results analysis revealed substantial habitual social media usage among respondents, with a considerable proportion reporting daily usage between two and five hours. Based on the results, it is clear that most of the young voters in this research are highly active on social media and have been using these platforms for many years. Their exposure to political content is often incidental, embedded within their habitual digital behaviour. Such frequent engagement creates routine exposure to political content and facilitates habitual behaviours that reinforce voter preferences and choices.

These findings align with the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) proposed by Venkatesh et al. (2012), which emphasises habit as a key predictor of sustained technology use and behavioural outcomes. According to Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2), habit refers to automatic behaviours developed through repeated exposure and consistent interaction that subsequently guide future actions without conscious deliberation. According to the

extended Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT2), habit is a critical determinant of behavioural intention and actual use, particularly in repetitive, automatic contexts such as social media engagement (Venkatesh et al., 2012).

In the context of political behaviour, habitual use of social media platforms fosters consistent exposure to political content, which can influence voters' decision-making processes. Biswas (2023) noted that social media platforms enable the dissemination of targeted political advertisements, viral content, and direct interactions with political candidates. These interactions, facilitated by habitual social media use, can reinforce political preferences and influence voting decisions.

Research indicates that social media significantly influences political efficacy and participation among young voters, leading to alterations in voter behaviour and choices (Akinyetun, 2022; Homssi et al., 2022). Akinyetun's (2020) research highlights that increased engagement in political activities through social media correlates positively with enhanced political efficacy, suggesting that as young people utilise these platforms more frequently, they feel more empowered to participate in politics. This aligns with the findings of Gardikiotis et al. (2020), who emphasise the importance of perceived social media influence in shaping political participation. They introduced the concept of presumed social media influence, establishing that individuals' beliefs about social media's effects can encourage political engagement.

Moreover, the interplay between social media and traditional forms of political participation cannot be understated. Chang and Park (2020) note that citizens involved in interest organisations tend to leverage social networks to amplify their political actions, directly linking social media use with a heightened sense of political participation. This notion is further supported by the findings of Dankwah and Mensah, which reveal a positive relationship between political marketing via social media and political participation, thereby suggesting that effective political marketing strategies on these platforms foster greater political involvement among young voters (Homssi et al., 2022; Dankwah & Mensah, 2021). This demonstrates that social media is not merely a platform for entertainment, but an instrumental resource for young individuals seeking political information and engagement.

Significantly, studies reveal that young voters increasingly rely on social media for political information, which shapes their electoral choices. Research by Mande et al. (2022) indicates that exposure to relevant political content on social media is a critical driver of political participation among youth in Nigeria, underscoring the need

for strategic political communication on these platforms. Yaakub et al. (2023) further echo this sentiment, asserting that mass media, including social media, play a pivotal role in providing young individuals with the information necessary to influence their political activities. Similarly, the findings from Poorrezaei et al. (2023) about the voter journey highlight that engagement with various political touchpoints, including social media, enhances overall voter involvement across political events.

Furthermore, insights into the roles of political influencers in online political settings reveal specific patterns of engagement that may shape voter behaviour. Political influencers can serve as pivotal links among users, increasing political literacy and fostering active participation, as observed in contemporary discussions on the influence of social media (Prawira et al., 2024; Riedl et al., 2021). As reported by Aliyu et al. (2023), the influence of social media in shaping voters' attitudes and behaviours is increasingly evident due to its capacity to disseminate structured political messages effectively. These positive engagement strategies are crucial for enhancing voter turnout and influencing decision-making during elections.

The research provides compelling evidence that Social Media Habit (SMH) has a significant positive effect on voters' choice, underscoring the role of habitual engagement in shaping electoral decisions. Unlike deliberate political campaigns, persuasion in the digital age often unfolds subtly through repetition, familiarity, and the ambient influence of everyday content consumption. This habitual exposure to political narratives, whether through algorithmic recommendations, peer discussions, or trending topics, gradually reinforces perceptions, making political preferences feel intuitive rather than consciously deliberated. While SMH does not directly motivate active political participation, it clearly contributes to shaping political perceptions, emphasising the need to examine how digital behaviours influence voters at both conscious and subconscious levels. These findings highlight the evolving nature of political communication, where habitual digital interactions help shape political choices in ways that are often overlooked.

5.10 H9: Young Voters' Behavioural Intention (YVBI) has significant effects on voters' choice.

Hypothesis 9 proposes that young voters' behavioural intentions (YVBI) significantly affect voters' choices. The results strongly support this idea, showing a

path coefficient ($\beta = 0.22$) indicating a moderate positive link, with strong statistical significance ($t = 4.05, p < .001$). This finding highlights the role of behavioural intention in shaping actual electoral decisions among young voters.

The research respondent highlights a politically engaged and digitally active demographic. A substantial majority of respondents were registered voters and had participated in the most recent election, indicating a strong commitment to political involvement. The analysis also revealed consistent digital engagement, with many respondents spending several hours daily on social media platforms. This frequent interaction with digital content increases exposure to political information, reinforcing behavioural intentions related to voting. The combination of high political participation and sustained social media use illustrates the powerful role of digital environments in shaping electoral behaviour.

The research confirms that when young voters demonstrate a willingness or planned commitment to engage in political activities online, such as sharing political content, commenting on issues, or following campaigns. These intentions translate into real-world electoral behaviour. Descriptive data support this conclusion, revealing that participants are not only highly active on social media but also politically engaged, with most having registered to vote and participated in previous elections. Digital engagement functions as a meaningful extension of political action rather than a substitute. Online behaviours, shaped by personal conviction, peer influence, and civic interest, form part of a broader pattern of political participation.

This finding emphasises the importance of digital political communication strategies that go beyond mere information or entertainment. Effective strategies cultivate intention by making political content relevant, emotionally resonant, and socially significant. Platforms that achieve this foster a readiness to act, which extends into the voting process. In a digitally mediated political environment, intention emerges as a reliable indicator of behaviour, particularly among digitally fluent and socially connected young voters. This underscores the theoretical significance of intention as a behavioural signal, reinforcing the role of digital engagement in shaping electoral outcomes.

This outcome is closely tied to the theoretical frameworks guiding this research, particularly the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) by Venkatesh and the Model of Primary Voters' Choice Behaviour by Newman and Sheth. The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) identifies

behavioural intention as a primary predictor of actual technology use. This concept extends naturally to voter behaviour influenced by social media interactions. In this context, digital engagement serves as an intermediary step, shaping voters' perceptions and reinforcing their electoral choices through exposure to political content, peer influence, and hedonic motivation.

The Model of Primary Voters' Choice Behaviour provides additional validation by emphasising the psychological and social mechanisms that drive voter decision-making. The interplay between individual motivations, external social pressures, and informational accessibility creates a structured pathway through which stated intentions translate into electoral participation. This framework highlights the evolving nature of political participation, demonstrating how digital environments facilitate cognitive and affective connections between voters and political issues, ultimately influencing their decisions at the ballot box.

The results align with existing research that emphasises the central role of behavioural intention in driving political participation. Young voters increasingly rely on social media as a primary source of political information, shaping both their engagement and their political efficacy. Yaakub et al. (2023) demonstrate that mass media consumption, particularly through digital platforms, plays a critical role in equipping young individuals with the resources necessary for political participation. Tareen and Adnan (2021) further establish that increased interaction with political content on social media correlates with higher internal political efficacy, positioning these platforms as essential tools for acquiring political knowledge and engaging in civic discourse. Omotayo and Folorunso (2020) reinforce this perspective by showing that social media fosters political awareness and provides avenues for young voters to express opinions and participate in political dialogue.

When young voters perceive social media as a valuable tool for political participation and observe similar behaviours among peers, their likelihood of participating in political activities increases (Hassan et al., 2021). This behavioural intention is further strengthened through involvement in young voters' organisations, which provide collective experiences that meet both personal and political needs. Guarino et al. (2020) highlight how such involvement fosters sustained political engagement and reinforces civic responsibility.

The literature consistently reflects a strong interest among young voters in political discourse. Saud et al. (2020) confirmed that young individuals actively seek to

participate in political discussions and activities, thereby reinforcing their influence in shaping political outcomes. Despite this enthusiasm, structural challenges persist. Bani-Hani (2022) identifies legal and institutional barriers that hinder young voters' participation, while Ling and Puyok (2024) emphasise disparities in political awareness among newly eligible voters, calling for targeted efforts to enhance political socialisation.

Social media continues to shape voter relationships and engagement, particularly among young voters who often express distrust in traditional political institutions. Abid and Harrigan (2020) show that political communication aligned with young voters' values strengthens behavioural intentions and influences voting decisions. Kuncoro & Sujito (2020) support this by identifying media exposure as a key predictor of political participation, with frequent social media engagement increasing the likelihood of voting.

Emotional narratives also play a significant role in mobilising young voters. Tan (2022) demonstrates that emotionally resonant content on social media enhances voter intention and participation. Calosa et al. (2023) find that direct political communication through social media is more effective than traditional media in influencing young voters, while Yussif et al. (2024) highlight the persuasive power of well-crafted political messaging in shaping voter choices.

Finally, Hassan et al. (2021) establish a clear link between social media use, political efficacy, and voting behaviour. Enhanced political efficacy, developed through consistent exposure to political content, strengthens behavioural intentions and translates into electoral participation. These findings collectively affirm that behavioural intention, shaped by digital engagement, is a reliable predictor of voter choice among young, socially connected individuals.

In conclusion, the research collectively supports the hypothesis that young voters' behavioural intentions regarding social media use for political participation significantly affect their voting choices. This relationship is illustrated by various studies that highlight the roles of emotional engagement, media exposure, and direct communication in strengthening the link between intention and actual voting behaviour.

5.11 H10: Young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) mediates the relationship between social media performance expectancy (SMPE) and voters' choice.

Hypothesis 10 establishes that young voters' behavioural intention mediates the relationship between social media performance expectancy and voting choice. Social media performance expectancy refers to the belief that using social media enhances effectiveness in political participation. The analysis confirms a significant indirect effect ($\beta = 0.05$, $t = 2.90$, $p < 0.05$), demonstrating that performance expectancy influences voting decisions through behavioural intention. This mediation highlights the psychological mechanism through which perceived utility of social media translates into electoral behaviour, reinforcing the importance of intention as a conduit between digital engagement and political action.

The respondents' analysis enhances the interpretation of the quantitative findings by highlighting a politically engaged and digitally active demographic. Most respondents reported being registered voters and having participated in the previous election, reflecting a strong motivation to engage in political processes. The analysis also revealed consistent digital engagement, with many respondents spending several hours daily on social media platforms. This frequent interaction with digital content increases exposure to political information and reinforces behavioural intentions related to voting.

These findings align with and extend the theoretical framework guiding this research, particularly the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2). The theory identifies behavioural intention as a central determinant of actual technology use, emphasising its influence on user actions in digitally mediated environments. In this research, Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) is applied beyond conventional technology adoption to encompass voter behaviour shaped by digital interactions and social media use. This application demonstrates how digital platforms function as influential environments that shape political intentions and translate them into concrete electoral actions.

This research draws on the Model of Primary Voter Behaviour by Newman and Sheth (1985). Their model conceptualises voting as a consumer decision-making process, influenced by cognitive, affective, and social dimensions. Among the seven

domains proposed, issues and policies, candidate image, and social group influence are particularly salient for young voters navigating political content on social media.

The mediation result suggests that YVBI serves as a cognitive filter through which SMPE translates into actual voting behaviour. In other words, social media does not directly shape vote choice but rather influences the evaluative and motivational processes that precede it. This supports Newman and Sheth's assertion that voter behaviour is not merely reactive but is shaped by internalised intentions and the perceived relevance of political stimuli.

The significance of this mediated relationship supports the core structure of Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2), especially the role of performance expectancy as a direct determinant of behavioural intention. The observed pathway, social media performance expectancy influencing behavioural intention, which in turn affects voting choice, confirms that beliefs about the usefulness of social media contribute to political behaviour. This relationship is particularly relevant among digitally native young voters, whose political participation is increasingly shaped by their interactions within digital ecosystems.

The hypothesis that behavioural intention mediates the relationship between performance expectancy and voters' choice to use social media for political participation is supported by studies affirming the interconnectedness of these constructs within the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) framework. This model identifies performance expectancy as a key predictor of behavioural intention, which subsequently influences user decisions, including political participation through digital platforms.

Breil et al. (2022) highlight the influence of performance expectancy on behavioural intention within technology acceptance models, although their focus on mobile health applications limits direct applicability to political contexts. Similarly, Salgado et al. (2020) demonstrate that users who perceive digital tools as useful exhibit stronger intentions to adopt them, suggesting a mechanism that parallels young voters' engagement with social media for political purposes. Tomczyk et al. (2021) explore the relationship between habitual use and performance expectancy, indicating that repeated engagement may shape behavioural intention. However, their emphasis on health behaviour applications necessitates caution when generalising to political participation.

Schretzlmaier et al. (2022) extend the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) model by confirming that performance expectancy influences

behavioural intention and ultimately user behaviour. Their findings support the relevance of this pathway in contexts where users perceive digital platforms as beneficial for engagement. Th  rouanne et al. (2023) further explore the role of expectations in shaping technology use, although their research lacks direct evidence linking these dynamics to voting behaviour. Pratiwi (2023) investigates behavioural intention as a mediator in digital service adoption, thereby reinforcing the mediation concept, though the context of Islamic banking differs from that of political participation.

Alodat et al. (2023) provide more targeted evidence by linking social media content preferences to political participation. Their findings confirm that behavioural intention mediates the relationship between perceived social media effectiveness and voting choices among young voters. This research directly supports the mediation hypothesis within the political domain.

In conclusion, the literature supports the hypothesis that behavioural intention mediates the relationship between performance expectancy and young voters' use of social media for political participation. While much of the supporting evidence originates from diverse contexts, the convergence of findings across disciplines reinforces the validity of this mediation pathway. Further research specifically focused on political participation will strengthen the theoretical and empirical foundations of this relationship.

5.12 H11: Young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) mediates the relationship between social media effort expectancy (SMEE) and voters' choice.

Hypothesis 11 states that young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) mediates the relationship between social media effort expectancy (SMEE) and their voting choice. Effort expectancy refers to the perceived ease of use of a technological platform. In this case, how easy it is to engage in political activity via social media. However, the results showed that the indirect effect was statistically not significant ($\beta = -0.01$, $t = 0.73$, $p = 0.46$), indicating that YVBI does not mediate the relationship between effort expectancy and voting behaviour.

The results indicate a digitally proficient demographic with extensive experience using social media. Social media is deeply integrated into users' daily routines, eliminating significant barriers to platform adoption. In this context, effort

expectancy holds minimal influence, as users navigate digital spaces with ease and familiarity. The absence of usability concerns reduces the motivational impact of Social Media Effort Expectancy (SMEE) on behavioural intention, diminishing its role in shaping voter choice. Political participation through social media is driven more by factors such as content relevance, peer influence, and perceived usefulness than by the platform's technical ease of use.

Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) positions behavioural intention as a central determinant of actual technology use, emphasising that individuals' intentions significantly influence their subsequent actions, especially in digitally mediated environments. In this research, the principles of the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) are extended beyond typical technology adoption scenarios to encompass voter behaviours facilitated by digital interactions and social media use. This extension illustrates how digital environments serve as critical platforms that influence voters' intentions, which subsequently translate into concrete political actions. The lack of a mediating effect here contributes to ongoing refinements of technology acceptance theories in the context of political behaviour. While Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) includes effort expectancy as a determinant of behavioural intention, this result implies that its relevance is domain-specific and perhaps age-contingent.

The Model of Primary Voter Behaviour by Newman and Sheth (1985) conceptualises voting as a multi-dimensional consumer decision, influenced by domains such as issues and policies, candidate image, and social imagery. The non-significant mediation result suggests that SMEE does not activate YVBI and thus does not serve as a conduit for influencing vote choice.

This aligns with the model's emphasis on substantive content and emotional engagement over functional ease. Young voters may prioritise issue alignment, candidate authenticity, and peer influence when forming voting preferences, rather than the simplicity of accessing political content. Thus, SMEE lacks the motivational depth required to trigger evaluative processes that lead to vote choice.

The result underscores the contextual limitations of effort expectancy in political behaviour models. While the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) provides a robust framework for technology adoption, its constructs must be critically adapted for civic engagement. The finding also reinforces Newman &

Sheth's (1985) proposition that voter behaviour is shaped by deeper cognitive and affective mechanisms, not merely by technological affordances.

Research indicates that effort expectancy is not a strong predictor of behavioural intention in political participation contexts. Ramdhani et al. (2023) find that both performance expectancy and effort expectancy lack significant influence, suggesting that young voters perceive social media platforms as user-friendly due to familiarity and frequent use.

Research examines the complex relationship between social media effort expectancy, young voters' behavioural intention, and electoral choices. While social media functions as a key tool for voter engagement, its effectiveness varies when analysed within frameworks that position behavioural intention as a mediator between effort expectancy and voting behaviour. Tan (2022) observes that young voters recognise social media as an accessible and effective source of political information, yet effort expectancy does not consistently translate into greater confidence in the political system or influence voting choices. The research highlights a gap in direct impact, reinforcing the idea that social media engagement does not automatically enhance electoral decision-making.

Young voters' behavioural intention interacts with social media usage patterns but does not necessarily strengthen the relationship between effort expectancy and actual voting. Some scholars argue that ease of use does not directly correlate with voter turnout, as internal political efficacy and subjective political knowledge play significant roles in shaping participation (Hassan et al., 2021; Lee & Xenos, 2020). Dreston and Neubaum (2022) demonstrate that exposure to news via social media increases voter knowledge but does not directly affect voting intentions, suggesting that behavioural intention operates within a broader framework rather than serving as a direct link.

Motivations for young voters to engage politically through social media extend beyond ease of use, encompassing entertainment and social interaction. Abid and Harrigan (2020) highlight that gratification from social media participation often outweighs functional considerations. Abdat (2020) supports this by showing that effort expectancy holds little relevance in determining social media adoption among Indonesian small and medium enterprises. This pattern likely extends to young voters who take platform accessibility for granted.

Intrinsic factors, such as political interest and socialisation effects, provide stronger explanations for young voters' behavioural intentions than effort expectancy.

Dankwah and Mensah (2021) establish that engagement with political content drives participation, while ease of use remains secondary.

The findings confirm that effort expectancy does not serve as a significant mediator of young voters' behavioural intention. Performance expectancy and intrinsic political motivations exert greater influence over participation, reinforcing the need to focus on engagement-driven strategies rather than usability enhancements.

5.13 H12: Young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) mediates the relationship between social media social influence (SMSI) and voters' choice.

Hypothesis 12 posited that young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) mediates the relationship between social media social influence (SMSI) and their voting choice. The results confirmed this hypothesis, showing a significant indirect effect ($\beta = 0.07$, $t = 3.21$, $p = 0.001$). This indicates that social influence exerted through social media platforms affects voting behaviour primarily by shaping users' behaviour. This finding aligns strongly with theoretical expectations from the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) (Venkatesh et al., 2012), in which social influence is a critical predictor of behavioural intention. Among young voters, the opinions and perceived expectations of peers, influencers, and social networks appear to play a key motivational role in fostering political participation.

The findings align with the descriptive context of the sample, which reflects a digitally literate and politically engaged young voter demographic. Respondents actively participate in electoral processes and regularly engage with social media, reinforcing social media's role in shaping voter intentions. In environments where digital interaction is embedded in daily routines, social influence strongly affects political decision-making. Exposure to political views, endorsements, and trends across networks strengthens engagement and reinforces voting choices. The prevalence of social media ensures that political discourse is continually embedded in online interactions, thereby solidifying its influence on electoral participation.

This mediated relationship is also theoretically consistent with the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) by Venkatesh, which posits that social influence affects behavioural intention and, in turn, drives usage behaviour. In this research, the same logic is extended to electoral behaviour: young voters who perceive political norms endorsed by significant others and online communities are

more likely to form strong voting intentions, which subsequently convert into voter choice. The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) framework emphasises the role of social influence, particularly during stages of behavioural formation, and the current research validates that, for young voters, digital environments serve as amplifiers of this influence, embedding political cues within everyday social media interactions.

The Model of Primary Voter Behaviour by Newman and Sheth (1985) conceptualises voting as a consumer decision-making process, influenced by domains such as social imagery, candidate image, and emotional feelings. The mediation result suggests that YVBI acts as a psychological bridge, translating social influence into actual voting behaviour.

Specifically, social imagery, defined as the stereotypes and associations linked to candidates through social groups, becomes salient when young voters engage with politically charged content shared by peers or influencers. The formation of behavioural intention reflects an internalisation of these social cues, which then activates deeper evaluative mechanisms that guide vote choice. This supports Newman and Sheth's (1985) assertion that both external stimuli and internal cognitive-affective processes shape voter behaviour.

This research highlights a socially embedded pathway: social media influence fosters behavioural intention, which then activates consumer-like evaluative processes that lead to vote choice, integrating the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) and Newman & Sheth's Model of Primary Voter Behaviour frameworks. This underscores the interpersonal and symbolic dimensions of digital political participation, particularly among young voters who are deeply immersed in online social networks.

Young voters' behavioural intention serves as a mediating factor that converts social media social influence into voting behaviour. Studies confirm that exposure to substantial social influence through digital platforms strengthens the intention to vote (Bergan et al., 2021). Psychological connections with influencers further reinforce engagement, fostering a sense of community and shared responsibility for political participation (Reinikainen et al., 2020; Azhar et al., 2024).

Influencer credibility plays a decisive role in shaping social media social influence. Genuine engagement builds trust and loyalty, increasing the likelihood that young voters act on their intentions (Sun & Smith, 2021; Delbaere et al., 2020). Social

media platforms served as interactive spaces in which follower-influencer relationships significantly affect electoral choices (Gammoudi et al., 2022; Kintu & Slimane, 2020). Peer influence also drives political engagement, with platforms facilitating environments where individual behaviours shape collective participation (Bergan et al., 2021; Agbesi, 2020).

The hypothesis that young voters' behavioural intention mediates the relationship between social media social influence and electoral choices is supported by research on political participation in digital spaces. The evolution of communication technology has transformed how young voters access political information and interact with electoral content, reinforcing social media's role in shaping decisions.

Studies indicate that young voters integrate new media into their political literacy, using digital platforms as primary sources of electoral information (Deddy et al., 2023). Social media enhances political efficacy, influencing voting decisions and strengthening engagement with political discourse (Hassan et al., 2021). Motivational theories highlight how young individuals actively interact with political entities online, reinforcing their intention to participate in elections (Abid & Harrigan, 2020).

Social influence, particularly mechanisms like the bandwagon effect and peer validation, strengthens this relationship. Research demonstrates that young voters are highly responsive to external influences in electoral decision-making (Thapliyal & Karmakar, 2021). Emotional and psychological factors shape their political identities in digital spaces, reinforcing engagement through shared community values (Abid & Harrigan, 2020).

Political education enhances young voters' awareness of electoral processes, thereby establishing a framework in which social media functions as an influential tool in shaping voting intentions (Sa'adawisna & Putra, 2023). Social media engagement fosters an informed political culture, reinforcing active participation and strengthening democratic engagement.

The findings confirm that young voters' behavioural intention mediates social media's influence on electoral choices. Digital platforms serve as primary channels for information dissemination, interactive discourse, and community validation, thereby reinforcing participation. Social influence, psychological motivation, and structured political communication shape electoral engagement, ensuring that social media plays a significant role in mobilising young voters.

5.14 H13: Young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) mediates the relationship between social media facilitating condition (SMFC) and voters' choice.

Hypothesis 13 posited that young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) mediates the relationship between social media facilitating conditions (SMFC) and their voting choice. However, the statistical analysis yielded a non-significant mediation effect ($\beta = -0.00$, $t = 0.13$, $p = 0.90$), indicating that the availability of resources or technological support for using social media does not meaningfully influence voting behaviour through changes in behavioural intention.

The analysis indicates that the mediating effect of Young Voters' Behavioural Intention (YVBI) on the relationship between Social Media Facilitating Conditions (SMFC) and voters' choice is not statistically significant. The lack of support for this hypothesis raises critical questions about the dynamics of social media and its impact on young voters' political participation and choice behaviours.

The characteristics of the sample illustrate the prevalence of social media use and digital literacy, creating a uniform landscape where facilitating conditions no longer serve as distinguishing factors in behavioural intention or voter choice. Access to digital tools and familiarity with social media are established norms, minimising the impact of facilitating conditions on engagement.

These findings challenge the theoretical expectation that behavioural intention mediates the relationship between external facilitating factors and behavioural outcomes, as proposed by models such as the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) (Venkatesh et al., 2012). In this context, facilitating conditions refer to the perceived availability of resources, skills, and infrastructure necessary for social media engagement. While facilitating conditions may have direct effects on behavioural outcomes, the lack of a significant indirect effect suggests that these conditions do not sufficiently influence voters' intentions to act as a mediator.

Newman and Sheth's (1985) Model of Primary Voter Behaviour emphasises a range of psychological, social, and cognitive dimensions that influence voter choice, including candidate image, emotional evaluations, and issue-based considerations. The finding that YVBI did not mediate SMFC's impact implies that voters' choices might stem more directly from deeper attitudinal and affective evaluations than from the enabling conditions of social media use.

In other words, the decision-making calculus of young voters may bypass behavioural intention altogether when leveraging social media for political information. They may access political content fluidly via social media due to the availability of resources (SMFC). However, their vote is influenced by other dominant forces such as emotional resonance, social imagery, or responses to current events, not necessarily the act of political participation via digital platforms.

This disconnect challenges the assumption that infrastructural accessibility (e.g., mobile connectivity, platform compatibility) directly fosters political behavioural intention among young voters. It highlights the need to reconceptualise the pathway from SMFC to voters' decision-making, suggesting potential moderation rather than mediation.

One possible explanation for these findings is that facilitating conditions might influence voters' choice through alternative mechanisms, such as direct pathways, rather than through behavioural intention. Prior research indicates that structural factors, including platform usability and accessibility, shape behaviour without necessarily altering psychological constructs such as intention (Dwivedi et al., 2020). Social media's role in political participation has been widely examined, with studies demonstrating that while it serves as a key platform for disseminating political information, it does not consistently enhance political efficacy or voting intentions among younger demographics. Rizki Putra & Nurcholis (2021) highlight that young voters view social media as a primary source of political information, reflecting a complex relationship between social media usage and political engagement (Deddy et al., 2023).

Facilitating conditions influence early engagement, particularly in technology adoption and the formation of initial behaviour, but their effect diminishes as digital routines become established (Aloitaibi et al., 2025). While facilitating conditions create an enabling environment, they do not necessarily strengthen voting intentions among young voters who are already familiar with social media platforms. Halida et al. (2022) emphasise that high exposure to political content does not directly translate into voting behaviour, as voter self-control and decision-making processes exert a stronger impact on behavioural intention.

Political efficacy plays a fundamental role in shaping voter engagement. Hassan et al. (2021) demonstrate that while social media enhances political literacy, it does not inherently strengthen voting decisions unless accompanied by a heightened sense of

efficacy. This finding explains why young voters' behavioural intention does not mediate the relationship between social media facilitating conditions and electoral choice as initially hypothesised. The absence of increased perceived efficacy weakens the expected mediation effect of behavioural intention.

Partisanship and political group identification significantly influence voter choice, often overriding interactions facilitated through social media. Studies confirm that party allegiance and ideological alignment shape electoral preferences more decisively than digital engagement (Jenke & Huettel, 2020; Bourgeois-Gironde & Ferreira, 2020). Ravanilla et al. establish that interpersonal connections and social networks mediate voting behaviour more effectively than social media exposure alone, reinforcing the argument that young voters' engagement through digital platforms does not directly foster behavioural intentions that align with voter choices (Ravanilla et al., 2022).

The findings confirm that young voters' behavioural intention does not significantly mediate the relationship between social media facilitating conditions and electoral choice. This outcome underscores the complexity of voter behaviour, revealing that facilitating conditions interact with psychological and behavioural constructs in nuanced ways.

While social media increases civic engagement and political awareness, evidence does not support the hypothesis that behavioural intention serves as a meaningful mediation factor between facilitating conditions and voting choice. Tan's research on young voters suggests that social media mobilises emotions during political campaigns but does not create lasting effects on voting intentions (Tan, 2022). Otache et al. highlight that while civic education influences voting attitudes, its impact varies across educational contexts, limiting the role of facilitating conditions (Otache et al., 2023).

Dasgupta and Sarkar explore the relationship between political brand perception and voter engagement, finding no significant evidence that behavioural intention mediates the relationship between facilitating conditions and voter decisions (Dasgupta & Sarkar, 2021). Halida et al. examine ethical dimensions of voting behaviour, demonstrating that voter motivations extend beyond social media facilitation, further challenging the mediation hypothesis (Halida et al., 2022). Abbas et al. confirm that political cynicism and brand engagement reduce the effectiveness of social media as a

facilitator of voter behavioural intention, reinforcing the argument that behavioural intention is not a central mediation factor in this dynamic (Abbas et al., 2024).

The evidence establishes that while social media enhances political information dissemination and engagement, behavioural intention does not significantly mediate the relationship between facilitating conditions and electoral choice. The dynamics of voter behaviour are shaped by a complex interplay of psychological, social, and ideological factors that extend beyond the enabling role of social media.

5.15 H14: Young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) mediates the relationship between social media hedonic motivation (SMHM) and voters' choice.

Hypothesis 14 proposed that young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) mediates the relationship between social media hedonic motivation (SMHM) and their voting choice. The analysis confirmed this mediating effect with a statistically significant indirect path ($\beta = 0.08$, $t = 3.61$, $p < .001$), supporting the hypothesis that the enjoyment and pleasure derived from social media use indirectly influence electoral decisions through increased behavioural intention.

The descriptive profile of the sample illustrates the influence of digital media on political participation. Respondents belong to a generation that seamlessly integrates politics into entertainment-driven online routines. Their sustained engagement with social media reinforces exposure to political content, normalising its consumption in hedonic formats. Enjoyment becomes a central driver of intention, shaping voter behaviour and decision-making processes. Once intention is activated, high voter registration and previous electoral participation facilitate the transition from digital engagement to actual voting. This pattern underscores the role of social media in shaping political awareness and mobilising young voters.

The findings align with the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2), which identifies hedonic motivation as a key determinant of behavioural intention (Venkatesh et al., 2012). Intrinsic enjoyment of social media activities—including entertainment, social interaction, and playful engagement—strengthens motivation to participate in political discourse and action through digital platforms. Hedonic motivation fosters engagement with political content, reinforcing the intention to act politically and culminating in voting behaviour.

The Model of Primary Voter Behaviour by Newman and Sheth (1985) identifies psychological constructs, including emotional response, symbolic values, and candidate image, as central to voter decision-making. The mediating role of YVBI implies that hedonic engagement contributes to political intention, thereby enabling the psychological translation of affective stimulation into deliberate electoral choices.

In this trajectory, the “experience quality” of political content on social media acts as a symbolic and emotional primer that activates personal relevance. Once young voters internalise their intention to engage, their candidate choice is driven by more nuanced assessments, such as trust, patriotism, personal events, and issue positions, which are hallmarks of Newman & Sheth’s Model of Primary Voter Behaviour.

This finding advances the theoretical understanding of young voters' political behaviour by revealing that enjoyment or pleasure from political participation on social media is a necessary, though not sufficient, condition for influencing voting choices. It confirms UTAUT2’s proposition that hedonic motivation strongly influences behavioural intention, while Newman & Sheth’s Model of Primary Voter Behaviour framework helps unpack how intention bridges emotional engagement and choice.

Young voters' behavioural intention mediates the relationship between social media hedonic motivation and electoral choice, illustrating how engagement with digital platforms influences political decisions. Hedonic motivation, defined as the pursuit of pleasure and enjoyment in social media experiences, increases interaction intensity and shapes voting intentions. Studies confirm that individuals driven by hedonic motivations actively engage with political messaging and influencer endorsements, reinforcing emotional connections that enhance participation (AlFarraj et al., 2021). Entertaining and relatable content amplifies emotions associated with voting, transforming casual interest into a concrete intention to participate (Dinh & Lee, 2021).

Academic literature supports the hypothesis that behavioural intention mediates the relationship between social media hedonic motivation and voters’ choices. Hedonic motivation significantly influences engagement patterns, shaping behaviours in digital environments. Research highlights its role in online consumer behaviour, demonstrating parallels with political participation (Traymbak et al., 2022). Socialisation through digital platforms enhances hedonic browsing, reinforcing decision-making processes that extend to political engagement (Kanthawongs & Jabutay, 2024).

Some studies explore motivation within non-political contexts, limiting their direct applicability to electoral behaviour (Santos et al., 2023; Tyrväinen et al., 2020). While hedonic motivation contributes to digital interactions, further research is needed to establish a direct connection between enjoyment-driven engagement and voting choices. The relationship between hedonic motivation and electoral participation exists but requires additional empirical validation.

5.16 H15: Young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) mediates the relationship between social media habit (SMH) and voters' choice.

Hypothesis 15 posited that young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) mediates the relationship between social media habit (SMH) and their voting choice. However, the statistical findings indicate a non-significant indirect effect ($\beta = 0.00$, $t = 0.32$, $p = 0.75$), suggesting that habitual social media use does not significantly influence voter choice through behavioural intention. In essence, the automatic, routine use of social platforms did not translate into vote choice through the motivational pathway of intention. The absence of a mediation effect suggests that although social media habits significantly influence young voters' behavioural intentions, these intentions do not directly translate into voting choices.

The descriptive profile of the sample illustrates how entrenched social media habits shape political participation. Respondents exhibit prolonged digital exposure, integrating political content into routine consumption. Familiarity with social media platforms fosters an environment where political discourse becomes an automatic part of daily interactions, diminishing the need for deliberative intention formation. Voting behaviour appears habitual, as consistent engagement with political discussions reinforces participation. High registration and previous turnout suggest that electoral involvement is already established for many, reducing the role of conscious decision-making in shaping voter choices.

The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) framework establishes habit as a direct and indirect driver of behaviour, exerting a dominant influence when technology use becomes automatic. Venkatesh et al. (2012) argue that as behaviours become routine, habit surpasses intention in predictive power. The findings confirm this pattern, demonstrating that social media habit directly propels electoral action, eliminating the need for intentional decision-making as an intermediary

factor. The absence of significant mediation reinforces the role of habitual engagement in shaping voting behaviour, emphasising its immediate impact on political participation.

The Model of Primary Voter Behaviour by Newman and Sheth (1985) identifies psychological constructs, including emotional response, symbolic values, and candidate image, as central to voter decision-making. The mediating role of YVBI implies that hedonic engagement contributes to political intention, thereby enabling the psychological translation of affective stimulation into deliberate electoral choices.

In this trajectory, the “experience quality” of political content on social media acts as a symbolic and emotional primer that activates personal relevance. Once young voters internalise their intention to engage, their candidate choice is driven by more nuanced assessments, such as trust, patriotism, personal events, and issue positions, which are hallmarks of Newman & Sheth’s Model of Primary Voter Behaviour.

This finding advances the theoretical understanding of young voters’ political behaviour by revealing that enjoyment or pleasure from political participation on social media is a necessary, though not sufficient, condition for influencing voting choices. It confirms UTAUT2’s proposition that hedonic motivation strongly influences behavioural intention, while Newman & Sheth’s Model of Primary Voter Behaviour framework helps unpack how intention bridges emotional engagement and choice.

The hypothesis that young voters’ behavioural intention mediates the relationship between social media habits and electoral choice remains contested in the existing research. While social media use among young voters is well-documented, studies present mixed results regarding its direct effects on voting behaviour. Belcastro et al. (2022) highlight that social media shapes political opinions, but translating these opinions into voting decisions depends on intervening factors such as political efficacy and offline engagement. Habitual social media use influences political discourse, but its role in altering conscious voting intentions remains unclear.

The absence of mediation challenges assumptions from the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) and related behavioural models, which often associate habit with the internalisation of behaviour. In political contexts, however, routine social media use does not necessarily equate to internalised political participation. Akinyetun (2022) finds that while social media strengthens political efficacy, this does not consistently translate into voting behaviour. Tan (2022) reports that while social media fosters engagement, it does not significantly increase confidence

in the electoral process, suggesting that habitual use alone does not drive voting intention.

Social media habits encompass frequency, duration, and engagement intensity, shaping political opinions among young voters. However, findings indicate that routine digital interactions alone do not increase voter participation. Lajnef (2023) highlights that while influencers impact teenagers' attitudes, these effects do not consistently translate into voting behaviour. Research examining habitual behaviours suggests that routine actions often bypass intentional decision-making, creating a gap between online engagement and offline political activity. Yun and Graham (2024) demonstrate that interpersonal relationships and volunteer experiences exert a stronger influence on voting behaviour than social media interactions.

Gardikiotis et al. (2020) introduce the concept of presumed social media influence, showing that young voters may believe digital platforms shape political processes. However, this perception does not necessarily translate into voting action. Omotayo and Folorunso (2020) find that perceived usefulness and subjective norms shape young voters' engagement with political content, but uncertainty regarding how engagement translates into electoral decisions weakens the relationship. Dampthey (2022) confirms that despite recognising social media's importance, voters rely more on traditional channels and peer networks for decision-making.

Factors beyond social media habits shape electoral decisions. Economic status and education influence voter preferences more significantly than habitual platform use, suggesting that social media facilitates access to information but does not singularly determine voting behaviour (Wangina, 2022). Paiman and Fauzi (2023) examine social media addiction and find that habitual engagement does not directly enhance voting intentions. Bayer et al. (2022) analyse habitual behaviours, showing that compulsive social media consumption can contribute to anxiety rather than effective decision-making. Lervik-Olsen et al. (2023) identify motivations such as fear of missing out, which reinforce routine engagement, but fail to establish a clear link between habit and voting choice. These findings highlight the complexity of habitual social media use and its limited impact on voting behaviour.

The evidence suggests that while social media habits influence digital engagement, behavioural intention does not significantly mediate the relationship between digital engagement and electoral choices. Young voters interact with political content regularly, but social media alone does not determine voter participation.

Political efficacy, interpersonal influence, and socioeconomic factors shape electoral behaviour more decisively than digital routines. A nuanced approach is necessary to understand how social media habits contribute to young voters' political participation. This confirms that behavioural intention serves as the psychological gateway between social media use and electoral decision-making.

5.17 H16: Experience will moderate the effect of social media facilitating conditions (SMFC) towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI).

The hypothesis states that experience will moderate the effect of social media facilitating conditions (SMFC) on young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI). Specifically, it was theorised that individuals with more extensive experience using social media platforms would be better able to capitalise on enabling conditions (e.g., device access, connectivity, platform usability), thereby strengthening the relationship between SMFC and YVBI. However, the analysis revealed a non-significant moderation effect ($\beta = 0.06$, $t = 1.31$, $p = 0.19$). The results of this research indicate that this hypothesis is not supported, indicating that experience does not significantly influence this relationship.

The findings demonstrate that variations in social media experience do not significantly influence how supportive infrastructure and resources shape voting intentions. The sample exhibits a high baseline of digital familiarity, minimising differences in experience and reducing its moderating impact. Digital proficiency is already well established among respondents, reinforcing the idea that external conditions play a limited role in shaping electoral behaviour. The consistency in exposure suggests that social media use operates within a stable framework, in which factors beyond the duration of platform use shape engagement with political content.

The findings challenge expectations derived from the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2), which posits that experience strengthens the relationship between facilitating conditions and behavioural intention (Venkatesh et al., 2012). Experience, defined as proficiency gained through repeated social media use, was anticipated to enhance the effect of facilitating conditions by enabling users to leverage available resources more effectively (Dwivedi et al., 2020). However, results indicate that experience does not significantly moderate this relationship in political participation contexts.

The research contributes to the theoretical understanding of UTAUT in electoral participation, suggesting that facilitating conditions may play a more central role than previously assumed. While previous research emphasises experience in moderating technology acceptance (Venkatesh et al., 2012), findings indicate that young voters, as digital natives, do not require extensive prior exposure to use social media effectively for political engagement. Facilitating conditions exert equal influence across different experience levels, reinforcing the idea that platform features, such as accessibility and interactivity, drive behavioural intention regardless of familiarity (Kim & Kim, 2022).

The role of social media in shaping political participation extends beyond experience. Research highlights that personal connections with political issues strengthen engagement, suggesting that emotional and contextual factors outweigh platform familiarity in influencing behavioural intention (Poorrezaei et al., 2023). The homogenization of digital experiences among young voters further explains the absence of moderation. Younger generations demonstrate similar baseline proficiency with social media, diminishing the differentiating effect of experience (Alotaibi et al., 2025).

Political attentiveness peaks during electoral periods, particularly for first-time voters, reinforcing engagement patterns that are not necessarily shaped by accumulated experience (Eckstein et al., 2024). More experienced users may exhibit complacency or disengagement, perceiving social media platforms as less urgent or relevant than newer users do (Kalla, 2021). This suggests that increased experience does not directly correlate with heightened behavioural intention.

Generational shifts in political consumption habits introduce additional complexity. Young voters increasingly engage with visual political messaging over text-heavy content, diminishing the impact of prior experience (Abid & Harrigan, 2020). Context-specific factors, including immediacy and simplicity, influence engagement, making experience a secondary consideration.

Knowledge and individual political attitudes play a decisive role in shaping voter behaviour. While experience is associated with higher competency in navigating political landscapes, disillusionment or cynicism can reduce engagement (Kalla, 2021). Political alienation among young voters further explains disengagement, as candidates failing to resonate with personal interests inhibit meaningful interactions with social media content (Kok et al., 2020; Coll & Juelich, 2022).

Findings highlight the need to focus on improving facilitating conditions to strengthen young voters' behavioural intentions. Enhancing accessibility, content

relevance, and interactivity may be more effective in driving political participation than relying on experience alone. Political campaigns should prioritise platform usability and engagement strategies to mobilise young voters.

While facilitating conditions significantly influence voter behaviour, the hypothesis that experience moderates this effect lacks consistent empirical support. Experience may affect engagement dynamics, but it does not decisively alter the relationship between social media facilitating conditions and behavioural intention.

5.18 H17: Experience will moderate the effect of social media hedonic motivation (SMHM) towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI).

This hypothesis states that experience will moderate the effect of social media hedonic motivation (SMHM) towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI). The findings of the research do not support this hypothesis. The interaction between experience and hedonic motivation was not statistically significant ($\beta = -0.03$, $t = 0.72$, $p = 0.47$), suggesting that experience does not significantly alter the effect of SMHM on YVBI. The absence of a moderating effect of experience on the relationship between SMHM and YVBI suggests that the enjoyment and pleasure derived from social media use do not differ significantly by users' experience levels.

The respondents for this research are predominantly young and deeply engaged with digital platforms, integrating online activities into daily routines. Extensive exposure to social media fosters familiarity with its features, reducing the impact of additional experience as a moderating factor. Leisure preferences remain largely uniform, reinforcing consistent engagement patterns across the sample. This digital immersion shapes interactions with political content, creating an environment in which habitual engagement influences behavioural intention more than accumulated experience does.

The findings refine the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) model by questioning the moderating effect of experience on hedonic motivation in political participation on social media. In highly saturated, digitally fluent populations, experience may not serve as a meaningful moderator, particularly in contexts where affective and expressive motivations drive user interactions. Hedonic motivation, often treated as an intrinsic driver, appears resistant to contextual

amplification through experience, unlike instrumental constructs such as performance expectancy and effort expectancy.

Studies confirm the strong influence of hedonic motivations across different user demographics. Deng and Yu (2023) demonstrate that curiosity and perceived boredom significantly shape behavioural intentions regardless of prior experience with digital platforms, reinforcing the idea that enjoyment is a universal driver. Research suggests that while social media facilitates entertainment-driven engagement, it does not necessarily translate into political participation. Kurniawan and Tambunan (2023) highlight that social media enhances crisis awareness but primarily activates cognitive processing rather than motivating political behaviour. Kaur and Kathuria (2024) similarly find that entertainment motivations encourage platform interactions but do not consistently lead to proactive content creation.

The absence of a moderating effect suggests that strategies to increase political participation should prioritise enhancing the hedonic aspects of social media rather than tailoring approaches to user experience. Pan et al. (2024) confirm that hedonic value strongly influences user engagement and behavioural intentions on digital platforms. Poorrezaei et al. (2023) further indicate that voter intention evolves through exposure to diverse political events, suggesting that direct political experiences play a more decisive role than hedonic social media interactions.

The findings diverge from theoretical expectations in models such as Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2), which propose that individual differences influence the relationship between hedonic motivation and behavioural intention (Venkatesh et al., 2012). Hedonic motivation is recognised as a strong predictor of engagement in digital environments (Dwivedi et al., 2020). However, research suggests that emotional appeals mobilise young voters temporarily without ensuring long-term behavioural stability (Tan, 2022).

Uniform exposure to hedonic experiences among young voters may explain the lack of a moderating effect. As digital natives, they demonstrate baseline familiarity with entertainment-driven features such as gamification and immersive content, reducing the influence of experience on behavioural variation. Song et al. (2021) highlight the widespread presence of hedonic design elements on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, reinforcing their consistent impact across experience levels.

Shifts in political participation further contextualise these results. Abid and Harrigan (2020) emphasise that entertainment-driven interactions dominate political

activity on social media, leading to a decline in traditional engagement patterns among younger voters. Social media's dual role in providing information while diluting political efficacy affects behavioural outcomes, particularly in populations that primarily use digital platforms for recreation.

Trust in media influences the hedonic motivation's role in shaping political participation. Zhang et al. (2023) demonstrate that scepticism toward social media as a credible political source limits its motivational potential despite initial enjoyment. The findings suggest that experience does not moderate the relationship between social media hedonic motivation and young voters' behavioural intention, reinforcing the need to focus on maximising content appeal rather than targeting engagement strategies based on experience levels.

Campaigns should prioritise hedonic engagement strategies to strengthen behavioural intention among young voters. The interaction of cognitive awareness, personal experiences, and media trust plays a more decisive role in political participation than previously assumed, challenging traditional models of engagement.

5.19 H18: Experience will moderate the effect of social media habit (SMH) towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI).

This hypothesis states that experience will moderate the effect of social media habit (SMH) towards young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI). The statistical result demonstrates a significant positive interaction ($\beta = 0.09$, $t = 2.34$ and $p = 0.02$), supporting the hypothesis. In other words, experience significantly strengthens the relationship between social media habit and behavioural intention. This indicates how repeated exposure to and familiarity with social media can shape how young voters engage with political content, ultimately influencing their behavioural intentions towards political participation.

The findings demonstrate that as social media experience increases, habitual engagement with digital platforms strengthens voting intentions. Frequent scrolling, liking, and sharing translate into more effective political action among experienced users, reinforcing the link between digital participation and electoral behaviour. Established social media habits shape engagement patterns, fostering automatic interactions that mobilise political decisions. The seamless integration of political content into daily routines highlights the role of sustained exposure in influencing voter

behaviour. Users with greater platform familiarity exhibit a stronger link between habitual engagement and political participation, underscoring the importance of experience in shaping voting intentions.

This result aligns with prior theoretical models, such as the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (Venkatesh et al., 2012), which emphasise the role of individual characteristics, such as experience, in moderating the effects of habitual technology use on behavioural outcomes. Social media habit, defined as the automaticity and frequency of users' engagement with platforms, is a well-established predictor of behavioural intention (Limayem et al., 2007). Experience likely strengthens this relationship by increasing the utility of habitual social media use. As users gain more experience, they may develop deeper familiarity with platform functionalities, algorithms, and content types, allowing them to better leverage their habitual engagement for goal-oriented behaviours such as political participation or decision-making (Dwivedi et al., 2020). This suggests that experience amplifies SMH's influence on YVBI by enabling more efficient and rewarding use of social media.

The hypothesis that experience moderates the effect of social media habit on young voters' behavioural intention is supported by studies examining the relationship between habitual engagement, experience, and voter participation. Social media has become a central tool for political communication and mobilisation, shaping young voters' behaviours as digital platforms integrate into their daily routines. Research confirms that habitual behaviours influence political participation by reinforcing engagement patterns. Hagger et al. (2020) demonstrate that habitual actions function independently of intention, affecting subsequent behaviour through automaticity. As young voters develop consistent interactions with political content on platforms like Instagram and Twitter, their engagement with politics strengthens.

Experience with social media is defined by the depth and breadth of familiarity with platforms, shaping how users navigate content and engage in political discussions. Studies highlight that experienced social media users demonstrate higher engagement in political activities, reinforcing the moderating role of experience in shaping behavioural intention (Belcastro et al., 2022). Chan et al. (2021) and Omotayo and Folorunso (2020) confirm that repeated exposure enhances civic engagement, strengthening self-efficacy and reinforcing participation. Niu et al. (2021) further establish that increased social media use enhances self-efficacy, reinforcing behavioural intentions in various contexts, including political engagement.

The intersection of social media habits with affective and cognitive outcomes explains its role as a facilitator of voter participation. Omotayo and Folorunso (2020) describe social media as a digital public square where habitual engagement shapes how young voters perceive their role in democratic discourse. Niu et al. (2021) demonstrate that positive associations between platform use and self-efficacy translate into civic engagement, suggesting that fostering beneficial social media habits strengthens political participation.

The relationship between habitual engagement and voting behaviour is reinforced by generational shifts in digital media consumption. Rapeli et al. (2021) confirm that early exposure to political participation influences future voting behaviours, demonstrating that formative experiences shape engagement trajectories. Studies further highlight the role of emotional narratives in mobilising voters, reinforcing the impact of habitual engagement with political content (Tan, 2022).

Political campaigns increasingly rely on social media to enhance voter efficacy and engagement. Research confirms that young individuals who develop strong social media habits interact with political content differently, reinforcing behavioural intention through sustained exposure (Dankwah & Mensah, 2021). Tan (2022) further establishes that emotionally charged political messages strengthen habitual engagement, reinforcing the connection between social media use and electoral participation.

Experience significantly moderates the relationship between social media habit and young voters' behavioural intention. Habitual social media use exerts a stronger influence on experienced users, highlighting the need for tailored engagement strategies that account for platform familiarity. Campaigns seeking to maximise young voters' participation should focus on fostering habitual engagement and providing opportunities for them to integrate social media into their political participation. Findings underscore the role of experience in shaping behavioural intention and reinforce the importance of structured social media strategies in mobilising young voters.

5.20 H19: Experience will moderate the effect of social media habit (SMH) on voters' choice.

Hypothesis 19 proposed that experience will moderate the effect of social media habit (SMH) on voters' choice. However, the statistical findings revealed a non-

significant moderating effect ($\beta = 0.04$, $t = 0.95$ and $p = 0.34$), indicating that experience does not meaningfully influence the strength of the relationship between social media habit and voters' choice. The absence of a moderating effect of experience on the relationship between SMH and YVBI suggests that habitual social media use influences voters' choices independently of their level of experience.

The findings indicate that variations in social media experience do not significantly affect the translation of habitual platform engagement into voting behaviour. Once social media habits drive participation, additional experience does not meaningfully affect voter choice. Consistent civic alignment among respondents reinforces this pattern, demonstrating that habitual digital engagement functions as a stable predictor of electoral participation. Established voting behaviours suggest that platform familiarity plays a limited role in shaping final voting decisions, as engagement remains consistent across levels of experience.

The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) framework identifies habit as a primary driver of behaviour, with experience refining the habit-intention link rather than directly influencing the habit-behaviour relationship. Venkatesh et al. (2012) assert that once behaviour becomes fully automated, experience ceases to differentiate outcomes. The absence of a moderating effect challenges theoretical models that position experience as a key amplifier of habitual behaviours in decision-making. The habitual use of social media appears to operate through automatic cognitive processes, with minimal influence from experiential factors. This aligns with dual-process theory, which distinguishes habitual actions as automatic rather than deliberative, suggesting that experience plays a negligible role in shaping behavioural intention.

One explanation for this result is that habitual social media use already exerts a direct and stable influence on voter choices, independent of experience level. Automated behaviours require minimal cognitive effort and are less dependent on contextual variables such as familiarity with digital platforms (Limayem et al., 2007). The effect of social media habit on electoral decisions follows a consistent pattern that does not vary significantly with accumulated experience.

Research exploring social media's role in political participation confirms that habitual engagement significantly influences voter behaviour, but experience is not a required moderating factor. Belcastro et al. (2022) demonstrate that habitual social media use shapes political preferences, reinforcing engagement without necessitating

deeper experience with political participation. Studies examining young voters highlight social media as a primary source of political information, reinforcing behavioural patterns but not necessarily strengthening voter confidence or electoral decisions (Tan, 2022; Kocaman & Coşgun, 2024).

Digital literacy introduces additional complexity to the relationship between experience and habitual engagement. While increased familiarity with social media can enhance critical analysis of political content, blind acceptance of social narratives remains more prevalent among less experienced users (Kocaman & Coşgun, 2024). Young voters interact with political content on social media in varied ways, emphasising the quality of engagement rather than the duration of experience in shaping behavioural outcomes.

Political campaigns must reconsider how social media engagement strategies influence young voters. Findings confirm that experience does not moderate the effect of social media habit on behavioural intention, reinforcing the importance of persuasive digital content over experience-driven interventions. The 2020 Election Research Project highlights the effectiveness of social media in shaping voter behaviour, emphasising the need for compelling engagement tactics.

The broader media ecosystem further contextualises these findings. Voters cultivate habitual behaviours around social media consumption, which contribute more to engagement and information-seeking than to direct voting decisions. Experience plays a more pronounced role in contexts where voters actively assess content, but habitual behaviours operate at a subconscious level, diminishing experience's moderating impact (Song et al., 2021).

Trust in the media influences political participation, shaping voting decisions more effectively than habitual digital routines do. Dash (2024) confirms that voter attitudes toward social media promotion directly affect voting behaviour, reinforcing the role of credibility over experience-driven interactions. Studies examining incidental news exposure highlight that frequent social media use does not necessarily translate into deeper political engagement or informed voting decisions (Lee & Xenos, 2020).

The results suggest that experience does not significantly moderate the relationship between social media habit and voter choice. While experience may strengthen other aspects of social media engagement, its role in electoral decision-making appears minimal. Political strategies should emphasise habitual engagement rather than rely on experience-driven modifications to voter outreach.

5.21 H20: Experience will moderate the effect of young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) on voters' choice.

Hypothesis 20 states that experience will moderate the effect of young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) on voters' choice. This hypothesis was grounded in theoretical assumptions from the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) by Venkatesh et al. (2012), which posits that individuals with greater experience are more likely to act in line with their behavioural intentions, particularly in technology-mediated contexts. However, the empirical results revealed a non-significant moderating effect ($\beta = -0.03$, $t = 0.67$, $p = 0.51$), indicating that experience does not meaningfully alter the relationship between young voters' intention to participate politically on social media and their actual voting decisions.

The findings demonstrate that the strength of intention consistently translates into voting behaviour among both novice and experienced social media users. Civic engagement remains high across the cohort, reinforcing the stability of electoral participation regardless of prior digital experience. Social media exposure is widespread, ensuring that once an intention is formed, respondents are highly likely to follow through and vote. The uniformity in engagement leaves minimal room for experiential differences, highlighting the direct influence of intention on electoral actions.

The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) framework posits that the relationship between intention and behaviour may weaken as habit replaces conscious motivation. However, Venkatesh et al. (2012) emphasise that for infrequent yet consequential behaviours such as voting, intention remains the dominant predictor regardless of familiarity. The findings confirm this pattern, demonstrating that even experienced social media users rely on deliberate intention to translate political attitudes into voting behaviour. Habitual platform use does not diminish the role of intention, reinforcing its primacy in shaping electoral decisions.

The hypothesis that experience moderates the effect of young voters' behavioural intention on voter choice lacks substantial support in the literature. While behavioural intentions predict voting outcomes, individual experience plays a limited role in shaping this relationship. Research confirms that voting intentions are primarily influenced by intrinsic motivational factors, including attitudes, norms, and perceived control, rather than external moderating variables such as experience (Fishbein &

Ajzen, 2011). In electoral contexts, intentions stem from personal values, political ideologies, and issue salience rather than familiarity with digital platforms (Kim et al., 2020).

Young voters engage actively with social media, yet this interaction does not consistently translate into higher voter turnout. Studies show that while social media provides political information, its impact on civic engagement remains inconsistent. Kuncoro & Sujito (2020) demonstrate that voting commitment increases with age, suggesting that younger voters lack the experience typically associated with electoral participation. Although social media enhances behavioural intention by exposing young voters to political discourse, it does not necessarily lead to direct shifts in voting behaviour.

Behavioural intentions toward political participation via social media are primarily shaped by perceived usefulness, ease of use, and social influence. These factors remain strong predictors of technology acceptance and engagement regardless of prior experience. Santhiveeran and Orr (2023) confirm that political interest and social media use drive participation, reinforcing the idea that engagement is influenced more by real-time interactions than accumulated experience.

Psychological dynamics also affect political participation. Dreston and Neubaum (2022) find that social media contributes to political knowledge but does not directly increase electoral participation, particularly among those less experienced in political environments. Flores et al. (2022) highlight that social media alone does not foster political engagement without individual motivation, reinforcing the limited role of experience.

Social media polarisation complicates political discourse, often reinforcing echo chambers rather than broadening engagement (Gu, 2024). Without experience, young voters may struggle to navigate political discussions effectively, diminishing the role of behavioural intention in shaping voter choice. Wang and Tsai (2023) further suggest that frequent social media use correlates with lower voter turnout, illustrating the varied effects of digital engagement on political behaviour.

Candidate evaluation is more significant than voting experience in shaping electoral choices. Othman and Saabar (2023) find that young voters prioritise honesty, ethical behaviour, and competency in candidates, reinforcing the idea that decisions are influenced more by perceived integrity than accumulated experience. Banerjee (2023)

establishes that trust in a political party strongly correlates with voting intention, suggesting that trust outweighs experience in shaping electoral behaviour.

Civic education contributes to voter intentions but does not decisively translate behavioural intention into voter choice. Otache et al. (2023) demonstrate that educational initiatives shape attitudes toward voting, yet external influences such as candidate trustworthiness exert stronger effects on decision-making. Cornejo (2022) highlights the role of strategic voting behaviours, emphasising that polling perceptions and candidate positioning often override personal voting experience.

Political participation is shaped more by psychological and social variables than experience. Levine (2021) confirms that emotional attachment plays a decisive role in voter decisions, reinforcing behavioural intention while minimising the moderating influence of experience. Findings confirm that experience does not significantly moderate the relationship between young voters' behavioural intention and electoral choice. Political strategies should focus on strengthening voter intentions directly rather than relying on experience as a determinant of engagement. Effective campaigns prioritise social influence and peer engagement over experience-driven initiatives, ensuring that political participation is driven by real-time interactions rather than accumulated voting history.

5.22 H21: The integrated Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) and Newman & Sheth's Model of Primary Voter Behaviour demonstrates explanatory and predictive power for voter choice.

The findings of Hypothesis 21 provide strong evidence that the integrated Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) and Newman & Sheth's Model of Primary Voter Behaviour significantly enhance explanatory and predictive power in accounting for voters' choice. Specifically, the explanatory variance of voter choice (R^2) improved substantially from 0.5% (baseline UTAUT2 model) to 35.7% (integrated model), while predictive relevance (Q^2) increased from 0.5% to 34.2%. The goodness-of-fit indices also showed stability, with SRMR values improving slightly from 0.074 to 0.073, remaining within the recommended threshold of <0.08 (Hair et al., 2022). These results confirm that the integrated framework provides a more robust account of how both technology acceptance factors (e.g., social media performance expectancy, hedonic motivation) and voter evaluation dimensions (e.g.,

candidate image, issues, and emotional responses) jointly shape electoral decision-making.

This outcome affirms the value of hybridising digital adoption theories with established models of voter decision-making. Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) alone emphasises rational expectations about usefulness, effort, and enjoyment of technology (Venkatesh et al., 2012). However, it omits critical affective and cognitive heuristics that traditionally shape political behaviour, such as candidate trustworthiness, emotional identification, and issue salience (Newman & Sheth, 1985). By bringing both frameworks together, this research advances a dual-process model of young voters' political participation: on the one hand, rational and utilitarian appraisals of social media affordances, and on the other, heuristic and affective mechanisms tied to electoral judgment. This resonates with contemporary research arguing that digital platforms amplify emotional, heuristic, and identity-driven cues in shaping political attitudes and decisions (Boulianne, 2023; Vaccari & Valeriani, 2021).

This outcome aligns with recent political communication scholarship highlighting that digital media use cannot be isolated from broader psychological and evaluative mechanisms of voting behaviour (Kasmani, 2023; Tan, 2022). In the Malaysian context, young voters' reliance on social media for political information intersects with traditional determinants of voter choice, such as candidate trustworthiness, issue salience, and emotional appeals (Welsh, 2023). The current research demonstrates that technological affordances interact with heuristic evaluations to explain voters' choice by combining Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) with Newman & Sheth's Model of Primary Voter Behaviour. This integrative approach is supported by recent comparative studies showing that hybrid models yield higher explanatory power than technology- or voter-choice models alone (Alalwan, 2021; Boateng et al., 2022).

The supported hypothesis, therefore, underscores the importance of considering digital engagement patterns alongside classical voter decision-making heuristics in analysing young voters' electoral participation. From a theoretical perspective, the findings contribute to advancing a dual-process understanding of voter choice in the digital age, where rational evaluations (e.g., policies, candidate image) coexist with affective and technology-mediated influences. Practically, these insights highlight that political actors seeking to mobilise young voters must not only optimise their digital

presence (ease of access to information, interactive content) but also ensure alignment with salient policy issues and emotional cues that resonate with young voters' lived realities.

The practical implications of this integrated approach are considerable for political communication strategy. The findings suggest that optimising digital campaign outreach through social media is necessary but insufficient; messaging must also be embedded in narratives of credibility, emotional resonance, and responsiveness to salient national issues for political actors. In an instance, TikTok's viral election content in Malaysia's GE15 illustrated how young voters were influenced not only by the medium's accessibility but also by emotional appeals around economic insecurity, corruption, and generational change (Kasmani, 2023; Welsh, 2023). Thus, campaigners must approach social media not merely as a technical channel of communication but as a space where traditional voter heuristics are refracted through digital culture.

The research contributes to both theory and practice with the result for Hypothesis 21. Theoretically, it demonstrates that a holistic understanding of voter choice requires combining digital adoption models with voter behaviour frameworks; practically, it highlights that young-voter mobilisation strategies must integrate ease of digital access with substantive appeals to candidate image, emotional connection, and issue-based trust. This dual emphasis provides a more complete and realistic explanation of how young Malaysian voters engage politically in the electoral environment.

5.23 Summary

This chapter synthesised the research findings by interpreting how young Malaysian voters engage with social media for political participation and how these interactions shape their voting choices. Grounded in the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) (Venkatesh et al., 2012, 2016) and Newman & Sheth's Model of Primary Voter Behaviour, the discussion established that political participation through social media among young voters is both a technological and a psychosocial process. Social media functions not simply as an information tool but as a communicative space where cognition, emotion, and identity merge to produce new modes of political participation.

The results confirmed that Hypothesis 5, which refers to social media hedonic motivation (SMHM), and Hypothesis 3, which refers to social media social influence, were the most powerful predictors of young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI). Enjoyment, pleasure, and peer validation were found to be central motivators of participation, indicating that affective and socially driven gratifications outweigh purely utilitarian concerns. These results affirm Venkatesh et al.'s (2012) emphasis on hedonic motivation in voluntary contexts and resonate with findings by Abid and Harrigan (2020) and Tan (2022) that young voters engage more readily with political content when it is entertaining and socially endorsed. Additionally, Hypothesis 1, which concerns social media performance expectancy (SMPE), had a significant positive effect, suggesting that perceived usefulness continues to shape engagement. However, its influence is weaker than that of affective enjoyment. In contrast, social media effort expectancy (SMEE; Hypothesis 2) and social media facilitating conditions (SMFC; Hypothesis 4) were not significant, supporting the observations of Puriwat and Tripopsakul (2021) and Atsbeha and Wodaje (2024) that ease of use no longer determines participation among digital natives. Social media is already integrated into daily life, creating a "post-effort" environment in which usability and access no longer constrain participation among young voters.

A particularly revealing contradiction emerged in the role of habit. Although social media habit (SMH) or Hypothesis 6 did not significantly predict behavioural intention, it exerted a direct influence on voter choice (H8), confirming that repetitive exposure to political content shapes preferences through automatic and subconscious mechanisms. This supports Gardikiotis et al. (2020) and Homssi et al. (2022), who note that routine digital use forms a cognitive backdrop for participation but does not necessarily invoke deliberate motivation. Similarly, social media facilitating conditions (SMFC), or Hypothesis 7, did not affect intention but significantly affected voter choice, suggesting that structural and informational accessibility can enhance decision quality without directly motivating action. These patterns indicate that technological affordances and habitual exposure can bypass volitional intention altogether.

The mediating analyses reinforced the cognitive–affective pathways that transform digital engagement into political behaviour. Behavioural intention successfully mediated the relationships for social media performance expectancy (SMPE) or Hypothesis 10, social media social influence (SMSI) or Hypothesis 12, and social media hedonic motivation (SMHM) or Hypothesis 14, confirming that perceived

usefulness, peer validation, and enjoyment operate through intentional engagement to influence electoral choice (Hassan et al., 2021; Naidu et al., 2023). Conversely, no mediation occurred for social media effort expectancy (SMEE) or Hypothesis 11, social media facilitating conditions or Hypothesis 13 or social media habit (SMH) or Hypothesis 15, demonstrating that political participation may arise independently of conscious planning. This asymmetry reflects the broader transformation of political behaviour in algorithmic media environments where exposure, emotion, and social reinforcement often supersede rational decision-making (Boulianne & Theocharis, 2020; Dash, 2024).

Moderation analyses revealed limited effects of experience across most relationships, showing that uniform digital literacy among respondents neutralises experiential differences. Only experience moderating habit effect on young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI) or Hypothesis 18 was significant, indicating that extended use amplifies the motivational power of habitual engagement. Other moderation hypotheses, such as Hypothesis 16, Hypothesis 17, Hypothesis 19, and Hypothesis 20, were unsupported, reinforcing the conclusion that digital nativity produces homogeneity in user competence and that affective and contextual cues are more decisive than technical experience in shaping participation.

The culminating analysis, Hypothesis 21, demonstrated that integrating UTAUT2 with Newman & Sheth's Model of Primary Voter Behaviour substantially increased the explanatory and predictive power for voter choice, from 0.5 per cent (R^2) in the baseline model to 35.7 per cent in the integrated model, with predictive relevance (Q^2) rising correspondingly. This confirms that young voters' participation cannot be understood through technology adoption factors alone but must be conceptualised through a dual-process model combining rational assessments of social media's utility with affective and heuristic evaluations of candidates, issues, and emotions (Boateng et al., 2022; Vaccari & Valeriani, 2021; Kasmani, 2023). The integration model reveals that emotional, social, and experiential forces interact with technological affordances to produce political outcomes, a synthesis that mirrors current trends in digital democracy research (Boulianne, 2023; Welsh, 2023).

In conclusion, this chapter demonstrated that young Malaysian voters are not merely adopters of social media technologies but participants in a hedonic social-political culture in which enjoyment, social validation, and habitual exposure shape civic behaviour more strongly than utilitarian or infrastructural considerations. Social

media thus operates as both an informational and an affective ecosystem, transforming political participation into an expressive, identity-driven act. This research advances a holistic explanation of digital-era voting that integrates technological adoption with emotional and cognitive voter behaviour, drawing on UTAUT2 and the Model of Primary Voter Behaviour. The findings highlight that successful political communication among young voters requires not only accessible digital platforms but also emotionally resonant and socially embedded narratives that translate online engagement into tangible electoral participation.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher summarises the discussion in every chapter in the thesis in order to shed light on the objectives of the research, which have been outlined, presented and analysed thoroughly based on the information gathered by the researcher. This chapter also focuses on aspects of the research, such as research implications, recommendations, future research, and the conclusion.

The first chapter begins with the background of studies on lowering the voting age to 18 and its impact on the political landscape. The use of social media in the 14th general elections was highlighted as important in engaging young voters. The results of the 15th General Elections were discussed at length, reflecting the complex cognition of young voters influenced by rapid information on social media. The chapter then continues to discuss the use of social media in political participation and how young voters' intentions to use social media affect their voting behaviour. Then, the role of social media during elections was discussed.

The problem statements were then discussed to comprehend the issue to be addressed or the condition to be improved in this research. This research aimed to examine how social media acceptance influences young voters' behavioural intention and voting choice. Young voters, as previous research has shown, are often regarded as having limited political motivation, a lack of interest in politics, and a diminished sense of civic duty, which reduces their desire to participate in the electoral process. There is also a lack of empirical studies on the factors influencing young voters' social media use for political participation, and a need for a standardised model to measure voter behaviour. Thus, the research objectives and research questions were established based on the problem statement. Chapter One ended with a discussion of the research's significance, illustrating its contribution to the existing body of knowledge, addressing gaps, and advancing understanding in the field. This research could help political parties to prioritise young voters and determine if social media is a useful strategy for increasing their political participation. It also helps political parties create engaging social media content that appeals to young voters. This research is crucial for politicians,

as it clarifies social media acceptance and the most influential variable in voting behaviour. It helps politicians to create effective strategies to improve their relationship with young voters. The research contributes to the body of knowledge by developing a model of voters' choice based on the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) and the Model of Primary Voter Behaviour.

Chapter Two focuses on a literature review of scholarly sources, including journals, books, research reports, conference papers, and seminar proceedings. A literature review is a comprehensive survey of existing research and literature on the topic being studied. This research explored social media's influence on young voters' behavioural intentions to use and accept social media for political participation, and its impact on voters' choice behaviour. This research focuses on the acceptance of social media in political participation among young voters. The chapter ends with the conceptual definitions of the dependent and independent variables and a proposed research model adapted from the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) by Venkatesh et al. (2012) and the Model of Primary Voter Behaviour by Newman and Sheth (1985).

Chapter Three centres around research methodology. The researcher specified all the procedures and techniques to be used to identify, select, process, and analyse information on the topic. This section allows the reader to critically evaluate the research's overall research design, validity and reliability. In this research, the quantitative method was used as the research is designed to involve statistical and numerical analysis derived from the questionnaire. Survey research was used to assess respondents' opinions on the issues under study.

The sample population consisted of young voters aged 18-40 who were registered voters in Selangor. The reason is that Selangor has the highest number of registered young voters. Data were collected using a set of questionnaires consisting of three sections. In this research, published survey items from the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) model (Venkatesh et al., 2003, 2012) and the Model of Primary Voter Behaviour (Newman & Sheth, 1985) are used.

In Chapter Four, the researcher focuses on data analysis. Data analysis involves examining, cleaning, transforming, and modelling data to determine useful information, draw conclusions, and support decision-making. It uses various techniques and tools to identify patterns, trends, and relationships within data sets. The fundamental screening was conducted using SPSS 29.0 for all respondents in this research (n = 475). Screening

was conducted to identify the data distribution, missing values, outliers, and collinearity issues, which reduced the final sample to 411 respondents ($n = 411$). This research uses SMART-PLS 4.0 for data analysis. Data analysis using SMART PLS involves several key steps. Initially, data is collected and cleaned to ensure it is suitable for analysis. The model is specified by defining constructs and their indicators, and creating the measurement and structural models. The PLS algorithm is run to estimate model parameters. According to Hair et al., the structural model assessment involves five steps: assessing collinearity, evaluating the significance and relevance of path coefficients, determining the model's explanatory power using R-squared values, evaluating predictive accuracy with measures such as Q^2 , and comparing alternative models to identify the best fit. Bootstrapping is performed to obtain standard errors and confidence intervals for significance testing. Finally, results are reported by interpreting findings and visualising them through tables and figures. This structured approach ensures reliable and valid insights into complex relationships within the data.

Chapter Five focuses on discussions of the research findings. In this chapter, the discussion was done to answer the hypotheses posed in Chapter Two of the research. All hypotheses were answered and supported by empirical research.

Lastly, Chapter Six focuses on the conclusions, limitations and contributions of the research. Future research was also discussed in this chapter. The conclusions were based on the purpose, research questions and results of the research. The implications of these findings and recommendations were explained.

6.2 Comparative Discussion of Findings with Prior Research

The findings of this study both align with and extend existing research on social media, technology acceptance, and political participation among young voters. Consistent with prior studies, social influence and hedonic motivation emerged as significant predictors of young voters' behavioural intention. This supports research by Hassan et al. (2021), Omotayo and Folorunso (2020), and Abid and Harrigan (2020), which demonstrate that peer interaction, emotional engagement, and entertainment-oriented content significantly shape political participation in digital environments.

The findings also reinforce the core propositions of the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2), particularly regarding the importance of performance expectancy in shaping behavioural intention. Similar to Venkatesh et

al. (2012) and Dwivedi et al. (2021), this study confirms that young voters are more likely to engage with social media for political purposes when they perceive it as useful and beneficial.

However, several findings diverge from previous technology acceptance studies. Effort expectancy and facilitating conditions did not significantly influence behavioural intention, contradicting traditional UTAUT2 assumptions. This suggests that in highly digitalised populations such as Malaysian youth, usability and access are no longer primary concerns. Social media has become fully embedded in everyday life, reducing the relevance of technological barriers in shaping political engagement.

The study also contributes to prior voter behaviour research by demonstrating that habitual exposure and facilitating conditions directly influence voters' choice, even when behavioural intention is absent. This finding suggests that political behaviour in digital environments may operate through both intentional and non-intentional pathways. Such a pattern demonstrates that technologically mediated engagement can complement Newman and Sheth's Model of Primary Voter Behaviour by introducing digital behavioural mechanisms into voter decision-making processes.

Most importantly, this study contributes to existing scholarship by integrating UTAUT2 with Newman and Sheth's Model of Primary Voter Behaviour. Previous studies have generally examined technology acceptance and voter behaviour separately. In contrast, this study demonstrates that social media acceptance factors, including performance expectancy, social influence, and hedonic motivation, interact with multidimensional voter evaluation processes to shape electoral decisions. The substantial increase in explanatory and predictive power of the integrated model confirms the value of combining technology adoption theory with voter behaviour frameworks to explain young voters' political participation in digitally mediated environments.

Overall, the findings suggest that political participation among young Malaysian voters is increasingly shaped by socially embedded, affective, and experience-driven digital interactions alongside rational and utilitarian considerations. This reflects broader transformations in contemporary political communication, where social media functions simultaneously as an informational, emotional, and social ecosystem influencing democratic participation.

6.3 Research Implications

Research implications highlight the significance and potential impact of the findings. In Chapter Four, twenty-one (21) hypotheses were established to draw specific, clear, and testable propositions or predictive statements about the possible outcomes of the research. Research implications bridge the gap between theoretical research and real-world applications, demonstrating how the research contributes to the field and influences future research, policies, or practices.

The findings of this research carry important implications for theory, methodology, and practice in political communication, voter behaviour, and digital media research. This research brings together the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) (Venkatesh, Thong, & Xu, 2012) and the Model of Primary Voter Behaviour (Newman & Sheth, 1985) to develop a comprehensive framework that explains how social media usage shapes young voters' behavioural intentions and, ultimately, their voting choices. The strength of the model's explanatory and predictive performance is shown by the increase in R^2 for voter choice from 0.005 to 0.357, with $Q^2 = 0.342$ and $SRMR = 0.073$. It shows that combining technological and psychological factors offers a richer understanding of how young voters participate in politics in the digital age. This integrated framework provides new insights into emerging patterns of political participation in Malaysia's contemporary democracy by linking young voters' use of social media to the deeper motivations driving their political choices. Social Media Facilitating Conditions (SMFC) and Social Media Habit (SMH) were significant predictors of voter choice. At the same time, Young Voters' Behavioural Intention (YVBI) served as a crucial mediating variable connecting social media engagement to electoral choice.

As a result, these findings highlight the multifaceted role of social media. It is not only a source of political information, but also a space where social connections and emotions shape how young people form and express their political preferences. The implications of the research are discussed in three parts. The theoretical implications explain how this research deepens and broadens existing perspectives within the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) (Venkatesh, Thong, & Xu, 2012) and the Model of Primary Voter Behaviour (Newman & Sheth, 1985). The methodological implications reflect on how research is designed, and the analysis approach and process contribute to advancing research practice in this area. Lastly, the

practical implications offer guidance for policymakers, electoral agencies, and political campaigners seeking to use social media more effectively to engage and empower young voters.

6.3.1 Theoretical Implications

This research introduces pivotal contributions to political communication, voter behaviour, and technology acceptance by merging the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) (Venkatesh et al., 2012) with the Model of Primary Voter Behaviour (Newman & Sheth, 1985). The combined framework explains how social media acceptance drives young voters' political behaviour within Malaysia's digitally mediated environment.

This research expands the theoretical understanding of young voters' voting choices by integrating two theories: the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) (Venkatesh, Thong, & Xu, 2012) and the Model of Primary Voter Behaviour (Newman & Sheth, 1985). The research addresses a significant gap in political communication research by correlating constructs related to social media acceptance, namely performance expectancy, social influence, and hedonic motivation, with factors influencing voting behaviour. The model's robust explanatory and predictive power (R^2 for voter choice rising from 0.005 to 0.357; $Q^2 = 0.342$; SRMR = 0.073) suggests that this integration provides a more thorough understanding of the impact of social media on political participation and decision-making among young voters.

Empirical observation reveals that social media performance expectancy (H1, $t = 4.24$, $p < .001$), social influence (H3, $t = 6.27$, $p < .001$), and hedonic motivation (H5, $t = 7.83$, $p < .001$) are significant predictors of young voters' behavioural intention (YVBI). These results validate that both cognitive evaluations (usefulness) and emotional satisfactions (enjoyment) significantly influence political participation. Alodat et al. (2023) found that young people's online political participation is driven by perceived enjoyment and peer influence. Hasell and Chinn (2023) showed that social media influencers can shape political identity and engagement by acting as social referents. This demonstrates the notion that social media serves not only as an informational platform but also as a venue for emotional and social affirmation, extending UTAUT2's constructs into research on political communication.

The integration of Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) with the voter behaviour model enhances theoretical understanding by demonstrating that facilitating conditions (H7, $t = 7.06$, $p < .001$) and habit (H8, $t = 4.32$, $p < .001$) have direct effects on voter choice, rather than solely affecting intention. This research extends the Model of Primary Voter Behaviour proposed by Newman and Sheth (1985) by identifying the influence of digital access and habitual social media usage on electoral outcomes. Barati (2023) noted that casual, but consistent social media use frequently promotes political participation both online and offline, a correlation evident in the Malaysian context of this research.

Additionally, the mediating role of YVBI, as supported by H10, H12, and H14 in the research, provides theoretical evidence that behavioural intention serves as an instrument connecting digital engagement and political choice. It created a link between technology adoption theory and behavioural political research by clarifying how psychological and digital constructs interact to influence voter behaviour. The findings from the research align with recent work emphasising that intention functions as a conduit between online engagement and real-world political action (Alodat et al., 2023).

Concurrently, the non-significant results for effort expectancy (H2) and facilitating conditions toward intention (H4) indicate boundary conditions in the context of young voters. In a population of digital natives, the ease of using social media is no longer a determining factor. It suggests that UTAUT2's effort-related constructs may hold limited relevance in mature digital ecosystems. This insight enhances Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) by indicating a contextual shift from practical to affective and social motivations in political media use.

The integration of Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) with Newman & Sheth's Model of Primary Voter Behaviour. The framework reveals the interplay between digital behaviour and cognitive-affective dimensions of voter choice. Candidate image, issue relevance, and emotional resonance collectively shape behavioural intention, which directly influences voting decisions and mediates the relationship between online engagement and political participation. Digital platforms cultivate internal motivations that materialise in external voter behaviour.

This research contributes to the literature on young voters' political participation in Southeast Asian democracies, addressing gaps in predominantly Western-centric analyses (Venkatesh et al., 2012; Boulianne, 2020). Malaysia's postcolonial, multiethnic, and hybrid media environment presents a distinct context in which young

voters engage with digital tools while navigating socio-political uncertainty and identity-based discourse to construct informed electoral preferences.

Overall, this research contributes theoretically in three ways. First, it extends the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) into the political domain, showing its applicability to civic and democratic participation. Second, it integrates technological and psychological perspectives to explain the interplay between digital engagement and voter choice. Third, it refines existing constructs by revealing which dimensions of Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) remain influential and which diminish in salience among digital-native electorates. Collectively, these contributions enhance the theoretical foundations for understanding digital political participation in emerging democracies like Malaysia.

While the original scope of this research emphasised theoretical, empirical, and practical contributions, the research process also yielded valuable methodological insights. The application of PLS-SEM to an integrated behavioural–political framework, coupled with the localisation and validation of survey measures, yielded several methodological lessons that strengthen future research practice in political communication. These insights extend beyond the theoretical relationships tested, offering guidance for scholars who seek to investigate digital political behaviour using multivariate, cross-cultural, or predictive modelling approaches. Accordingly, the methodological implications presented below highlight how research design, analytical procedures, and validation strategies contribute to advancing both research rigour and methodological innovation within this domain.

6.3.2 Methodological Implications

In terms of methodology, this research makes several contributions to political communication research that employs quantitative designs. The adoption of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) enabled the simultaneous examination of complex interrelationships among latent constructs, thereby demonstrating the robustness of SmartPLS 4 in analysing multi-layered behavioural models integrating psychological and technological factors. This methodological approach aligns with Hair et al. (2022), who recommend PLS-SEM for exploratory and predictive models in social sciences.

Furthermore, this research underscores the integration of behavioural intention as a mediator, highlighting the analytical flexibility of PLS-SEM for testing mediation pathways. It also demonstrates how survey-based designs can incorporate both technological adoption variables and traditional voter determinants. It bridges a methodological gap between information systems and political behaviour research.

Methodologically, this research contributes by demonstrating the application of PLS-SEM to an integrated political–technological framework. Using SmartPLS 4, the research effectively modelled direct, mediating, and moderating effects, offering a robust multivariate assessment of voter behaviour. The R^2 and Q^2 values confirm substantial explanatory and predictive relevance, while the SRMR = 0.07 indicates an acceptable model fit per Hair et al. (2022) standards.

The use of mediated modelling, with Young Voters’ Behavioural Intention (YVBI) as an intervening variable, also refines analytical practice in political communication research. This research validates the mediating role of intention as central to understanding how digital motivations translate into voting outcomes by demonstrating that Social Media Performance Expectancy (SMPE), Social Media Social Influence (SMSI), and Social Media Hedonic Motivation (SMHM) indirectly influence voter choice through Young Voters’ Behavioural Intention (YVBI).

Furthermore, the moderation analysis adds methodological novelty: the significant moderating effect of experience on the relationship between Social Media Habit (SMH) and Young Voters’ Behavioural Intention (YVBI) ($H18, t = 2.34, p = .02$) suggests that prior digital exposure strengthens the habit–intention link. This provides a valuable template for future research exploring interaction effects between behavioural constructs in political technology adoption.

6.3.3 Practical Implications

The findings of this research have significant implications for various stakeholders in Malaysia’s electoral and civic landscape, including political parties, policymakers, educators, and electoral institutions. The empirical evidence demonstrates that performance expectancy, social influence, and hedonic motivation are the strongest predictors of young voters’ behavioural intention to use social media for political participation, while facilitating conditions, habit, and behavioural intention itself exert direct influence on voting choice. Collectively, these outcomes reveal how

technological motivations, emotional engagement, and habitual digital behaviour shape political decision-making. Practical implications represent the actionable insights drawn from this research's empirical evidence, offering concrete guidance for political practitioners, educators, and policymakers. These implications reflect the stakeholder significance identified in Chapter 1 and demonstrate how integrating the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) with Newman & Sheth's Model of Primary Voter Behaviour translates theoretical understanding into policy-relevant, real-world strategies to enhance young voters' political participation.

6.3.3.1 Implications for Political Parties and Campaign Strategists

The significant influence of Social Media Performance Expectancy (H1) and Social Media Hedonic Motivation (H5) on Young Voters' Behavioural Intention (YVBI) indicates that young voters are drawn to digital political content perceived as both useful and enjoyable. Political parties should therefore design campaigns that combine informational clarity with affective appeal. Evidence from Jalli, Unggraini, and Setianto (2025) finds that short-form video formats on TikTok and Instagram cultivate emotional connection and stimulate participatory discussion.

Accordingly, campaigns centred on young voters should incorporate interactive features such as polls, quizzes, and live-stream dialogues to transform passive viewing into participatory learning. Visually rich formats such as infographics, reels, or meme-based issue framing to reinforce message recall and civic curiosity, strengthening the pathway from online engagement to real-world political behaviour (Alodat et al., 2023).

6.3.3.2 Implications for Young Voters and Civic Education

The mediating effect of behavioural intention between social media engagement and voter choice underscores the need for sustained, purposeful political learning. Civic education programs can leverage this by connecting daily social media use with structured political understanding. Schools, universities, and NGOs can build on this by developing gamified learning apps, digital town halls, and student-led campaigns that simulate participatory democracy.

Moreover, the direct relationship between Social Media Habit (SMH) and voters' choice (H8) suggests that embedding civic reminders within social platforms

such as election-day alerts or issue-tracking dashboards can normalise political participation as a routine digital behaviour. These initiatives align with Malaysia's *Undi18* reforms, which aimed to cultivate a long-term civic identity among first-time voters.

6.3.3.3 Implications for Politicians and Political Leaders

The strong predictive power of Social Media Social Influence (SMSI) (H3) confirms that political mobilisation among young voters is socially mediated. Politicians who collaborate with micro-influencers, student leaders, and community advocates can amplify credibility and reach. As Hasell (2023) observes, parasocial relationships with trusted online personalities significantly affect political attitudes. Transparent, dialogic engagement responding to comments, joining digital forums, and co-creating content with influencers enhances authenticity and perceived accountability.

Leaders should adopt a participatory communication style that prioritises empathy, responsiveness, and issue-based storytelling. Noorman et al. (2024) highlight that affective engagement on social media correlates with stronger political loyalty and trust among young voters. Thus, cultivating emotional resonance is as critical as delivering information.

6.3.3.4 Implications for Societal, Institutional, and Policy Stakeholders

The significant direct effects of Social Media Facilitating Conditions (SMFC) in Hypothesis 7 and Social Media Habit (SMH) in Hypothesis 8 emphasise that equitable access and supportive digital environments are prerequisites for inclusive participation. Institutions such as the Election Commission of Malaysia (EC) should enhance mobile-friendly registration, multilingual information portals, and verified fact-checking channels to remove structural barriers. Empirical research shows that young voters with higher media literacy are substantially more likely to vote (Siegel-Stechler et al., 2025).

Government ministries, the Election Commission of Malaysia (EC), and NGOs should therefore collaborate on national digital literacy campaigns and integrate workshops, influencer partnerships, and peer-led civic challenges. These programs can

bridge information gaps, counter misinformation, and foster sustained democratic participation. Policy frameworks should also embed digital civic education within formal curricula and establish transparent regulations for online campaigning to restore young voters' trust in political institutions.

6.3.3.5 Broader Societal and Post-Undi18 Relevance

In Malaysia's evolving post-*Undi18* context, this research provides a data-driven blueprint for more democratic renewal that includes young voters. Ministries, municipal councils, and civil-society organisations can use these findings to craft evidence-based, scalable interventions, such as youth digital-governance councils, national e-participation dashboards, and open-data repositories that monitor voter engagement.

Aligning civic infrastructure and outreach strategies with the key motivational dimensions identified here, usefulness (SMPE), social connection (SMSI), enjoyment (SMHM), and routine habit (SMH), will ensure that digital citizenship becomes a cornerstone of Malaysian democracy. When institutional practice mirrors young voters' communicative culture, participation transitions from sporadic election activity to an enduring civic norm.

These practical and policy implications validate the stakeholder significance proposed in Chapter 1. They demonstrate how the empirical findings of this research can guide political communication practice, youth education, and policy development to make democratic participation more inclusive, informed, and sustainable. Malaysia's political and civic institutions can cultivate a digitally engaged generation that strengthens the nation's democratic fabric by operationalising evidence regarding social media use and political behaviour. These findings can be proposed to the Election Commission (EC) and political parties developing digital strategies for first-time young voters.

6.4 Limitation

Although the current research contributes to understanding the behavioural intentions and voting choices of young voters within the Malaysian political communication context, it is crucial to recognise the limitations inherent in the research

design and methodology. There is no empirical investigation devoid of constraints. Recognising these limitations is crucial for accurate interpretation of findings and for steering future research (Valencia, 2022). The constraints of this research mainly stem from the nature of the data collection, the research design, and the contextual parameters of the investigation. The following discussion focuses on five limitations: sampling and generalisability; cross-sectional design and causality; measurement and construct representation; common method variance and single-source bias; and contextual and temporal specificity. It presents a clear analysis of the research's scope by outlining methodological and contextual factors and identifying avenues for improvement in future research (Barbrook-Johnson & Carrick, 2022).

6.4.1 Sampling and Generalisability

The research sample consisted of young voters from Selangor. The research employed a stratified sampling method. This provided convenience and access to the target cohort; however, it limits the capacity to generalise the findings to the wider population of Malaysian young voters across various states, ethnic groups, and political contexts. In example, young voters from Sabah, Sarawak, or Kelantan may encounter distinct socio-political dynamics and patterns of digital media usage. Consequently, the external validity of the findings is constrained.

6.4.2 Cross-Sectional Design and Causality

The data collected in this research were cross-sectional. It means the responses were collected at a single point in time. The links identified between the constructs in this research are not justified as definitive causal relationships. This limitation aligns with previous research warning that cross-sectional surveys yield mere snapshots of phenomena rather than demonstrating temporal ordering or changes over time (Taris, 2021). Consequently, while the structural model reveals significant paths, they ought to be regarded as correlational rather than purely causal.

6.4.3 Contextual and Temporal Specificity

This research was conducted in the aftermath of the 15th Malaysian General Election (GE15) and the implementation of *Undi18*. It was a period of increased political participation among young voters and a shift in their social media usage. This was demonstrated by the increasing use of short-form video platforms and social media content in election campaigns. As a result, the findings reflect the specific conditions of the electoral cycle and digital media environment in which the research was conducted. However, with the rapid evolution of social media platforms and user behaviours, the patterns observed in this research may not continue in future election periods or across different national and regional contexts. Therefore, the generalisability of the results should be interpreted with caution, and future research is encouraged to replicate this investigation during subsequent electoral cycles or in different sociopolitical settings to validate the stability of these findings.

6.5 Research Recommendation

Research recommendations are guidelines or suggestions proposed by researchers based on research findings. They aim to direct future research efforts, improve methodologies, enhance the applicability of results, and ensure ethical considerations are met. Effective research recommendations are crucial for advancing knowledge within a field and for informing practice and policy decisions.

Research recommendations translate the research's findings into actionable guidance for scholars, practitioners, and policymakers. These recommendations mirror the four significant areas outlined in Chapter 1, which are theoretical, empirical, practical, and societal or policy. This is to ensure conceptual continuity between the research aims and their realised contributions.

The integrated Voters' Choice Model can be used to understand the factors that influence young voters to accept social media for political participation, especially voting and their voting behaviour. It can help young voters, political parties and politicians in analysing and understanding the impact of social media acceptance towards voting behaviour.

6.5.1 Theoretical and Conceptual Recommendations

This research advances theoretical understanding of digital political participation by integrating the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) (Venkatesh et al., 2012) with the Model of Primary Voter Behaviour (Newman & Sheth, 1985), producing the Voters' Choice Model. This study developed and validated an Integrated Voters' Choice Model that merges the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) constructs with the evaluative dimensions of Newman and Sheth's Model of Primary Voter Behaviour to explain young Malaysian voters' electoral decisions. This integration bridges technological acceptance theory and political behaviour frameworks, offering a comprehensive framework for explaining how digital motivations, particularly performance expectancy, social influence, and hedonic motivation, translate into behavioural intention and ultimately influence voting decisions among young voters.

Researchers, educators, and communication strategists are encouraged to adopt this model as a conceptual foundation for studying and interpreting digital political participation in emerging democracies. The framework provides a theoretically grounded lens for analysing how technology acceptance, affective responses, and social interaction shape civic engagement. It can be applied in evaluating campaigns centred on young voters, online voter-education programmes, and digital civic-engagement initiatives, enabling both scholars and practitioners to identify the motivational and contextual determinants of political participation with greater precision.

Beyond the proposed model, advancing the body of knowledge on social media and political behaviour requires further refinement of existing technology-acceptance frameworks to more accurately reflect civic contexts. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) remains a foundational theory, yet its scope can be expanded to include constructs specific to political behaviour. Integrating variables such as political efficacy, trust in political information, and mechanisms of political mobilisation enhances the explanatory power of technology-acceptance research and situates it within the civic domain. These additions clarify the conditions under which individuals use digital platforms for political purposes and help distinguish civic from non-civic technology adoption (Siegel-Stechler et al., 2025).

Similarly, applying the constructs of the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology

2 (UTAUT2), such as performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions, within political-engagement studies reveals the psychological and infrastructural dimensions of digital participation. These theoretical applications illuminate the motivational differences driving civic and non-civic technology use and extend UTAUT2's relevance beyond commercial or organisational settings.

Cross-cultural applications of the Integrated Voters' Choice Model are strongly recommended. Employing the model in other Southeast Asian democracies, such as Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines, would enrich understanding of how cultural values, political systems, and levels of digital literacy shape political behaviour. Comparative validation could identify context-specific patterns and structural differences, supporting the development of culturally responsive strategies for leveraging social media in political mobilisation (Lim, 2024; Akobiarek & Puyok, 2024; Ismail & Ahmad Sani, 2025).

The model also invites the integration of affective and identity-based theories into political communication research. Frameworks such as the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) and Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) can be incorporated to examine how message elaboration, emotional triggers, and group identification reinforce online political participation. Combining these perspectives with UTAUT2's behavioural constructs provides a multidimensional view of young voters' political participation that accounts for both technological affordances and socio-psychological processes (Marquart et al., 2020).

Finally, the Integrated Voters' Choice Model can serve as a practical analytical instrument for policymakers and educators designing civic education curricula and digital voter outreach initiatives. By operationalising constructs such as political trust, efficacy, and algorithmic exposure, the model offers an evidence-based means of evaluating programme effectiveness and informing policy interventions (Siegel-Stechler et al., 2025). In this way, the framework transcends theoretical abstraction and becomes an actionable guide linking political-communication scholarship to real-world democratic engagement.

6.5.2 Empirical and Methodological Recommendations

Empirically, this research provides a validated and contextually grounded dataset that advances understanding of young voters' digital political behaviour. The

Integrated Voters' Choice Model demonstrates the explanatory and predictive capacity of combining technology-acceptance constructs with psychological and contextual variables in electoral research. It is recommended that researchers and academic institutions adopt this integrated measurement model as a reference framework for studying digital political participation across comparable settings. Applying similar indicators in future national surveys or institutional studies would enable systematic monitoring of social-media effects on civic engagement (Boulianne & Theocharis, 2020).

Methodologically, this research highlights the value of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) for analysing complex mediated and moderated relationships within communication research. Scholars are encouraged to apply and refine PLS-SEM procedures alongside digital-trace analytics and qualitative approaches, such as focus group discussions and ethnographic observation, to capture both numerical precision and interpretive depth (Guenther, 2025; Ng, 2022). This triangulated strategy allows for a richer understanding of how online discourse, emotion, and behavioural intention interact within political communication environments.

Finally, the analytical procedures implemented in this research illustrate the potential of SmartPLS Predict and machine-learning extensions for evaluating predictive accuracy of behavioural constructs such as performance expectancy and hedonic motivation. It is therefore recommended that communication researchers integrate predictive analytics into future survey pipelines and university research curricula to improve methodological literacy and strengthen data-driven decision-making (Guenther, 2025).

Collectively, these empirical and methodological recommendations encourage the use of validated measurement instruments, the integration of mixed methods, and predictive modelling techniques that can immediately enhance the robustness and comparability of digital political-engagement research in Malaysia and the wider Southeast Asian region.

6.5.3 Practical and Stakeholder Recommendations

The Integrated Voters' Choice Model provides applied insight for young voters, political parties, and politicians. It highlights how digital acceptance factors such as

performance expectancy, social influence, and hedonic motivation can be strategically leveraged to create more compelling political content on social media. Collectively, these insights support the development of more effective, youth-centred political communication practices in Malaysia.

6.5.3.1 Young Voters

Understanding young voters' political participation requires a focused investigation into the influence of social media content quality. Accurate, timely, and relevant content enhances engagement by aligning with the interests and concerns of young voters. Exposure to such content increases political awareness and strengthens participation in civic activities. Peer influence also plays a pivotal role, as social interactions within digital networks foster collective identity and shared purpose. These interactions motivate young voters to participate in political discourse and action, especially when aligned with community values.

Gamification adds another dimension to political participation. Features such as points, badges, and leaderboards introduce a rewarding and interactive element to civic engagement. These mechanisms strengthen user involvement by making political activities more appealing and accessible within everyday digital routines. Evaluating the impact of gamified political content provides insight into how entertainment-driven structures enhance sustained involvement among young voters.

Advancing political participation requires a parallel investment in media literacy. Equipping young voters to assess political content critically moves their participation beyond passive consumption. While hedonic motivation activates initial behavioural intention, structured initiatives must enable voters to distinguish between casual scrolling and meaningful engagement. Educational programs that integrate gamified civic learning and embed political discourse within appealing formats harness affective responses to deepen political commitment and reinforce intentional voter behaviour.

6.5.3.2 Political Parties

Political parties aiming to engage young voters must prioritise developing targeted social media campaigns that reflect young voters' interests and communication

preferences. Crafting platform-appropriate content that resonates with issues such as climate change, education, and employment strengthens relevance and deepens political connection. Interactive formats, including short-form videos, infographics, and memes, facilitate message retention and foster civic awareness among digitally active young voters.

Leveraging influencers and micro-influencers enhances message reach and credibility. These individuals maintain strong ties with their audiences and effectively amplify political narratives across platforms. Strategic collaboration with online opinion leaders increases visibility and motivates young voters to participate more actively in political discourse. Empirical inquiry into influencer-based outreach strategies remains essential to optimising young voters' mobilisation.

Data analytics offer valuable insights into voter behaviour and engagement patterns. Integrating behavioural data enables political actors to tailor content, personalise outreach, and refine campaign strategies. Insights derived from digital interaction metrics inform evidence-based decision-making and support continuous campaign improvement.

Emotionally resonant content and peer-based messaging enhance the efficacy of outreach initiatives. Hedonic and social influences have a greater impact on young voters' behavioural intention than structural conditions alone. Embedding issue-based messaging within entertaining media aligns with affective triggers that shape voter commitment. Segmenting young voters based on dominant motivational drivers, including enjoyment, peer networks, and identity alignment, improves engagement outcomes and strengthens electoral participation.

6.5.3.3 Politicians

Effective political communication through social media requires politicians to strengthen their digital literacy. Mastering platform functionality and understanding the nuances of online communication enhances their capacity to deliver compelling messages and engage meaningfully with constituents. Politicians must demonstrate proficiency not only in content creation but also in dialogic exchange, responding to interactions with clarity and credibility.

Authentic engagement builds voter trust and reinforces political legitimacy. Transparent communication fosters relatability and establishes emotional resonance

with constituents. Voters respond more positively when politicians reveal personal dimensions and connect policy agendas to lived experiences. Strategic use of interactive features such as live question-and-answer sessions, polls, and comment-driven posts enhances this connection by enabling two-way communication. These tools increase civic involvement by allowing constituents to feel acknowledged and represented.

Findings from this research indicate that emotional resonance, symbolic storytelling, and genuine interaction exert greater influence on young voters' political intention than routine visibility or passive media consumption. Politicians must shift away from transactional outreach and adopt narrative strategies that mirror young voters' aspirations. Crafting digital personas that reflect shared values and cultural touchpoints strengthens credibility and encourages sustained engagement.

Harnessing these practices enables politicians to mobilise young voters effectively. Integrating emotional, narrative, and interactive techniques across digital platforms transforms communication from exposure-based visibility into meaningful political participation.

6.5.4 Societal and Policy Recommendations

At the policy level, findings highlight the necessity of institutionalising digital civic education and media literacy policies nationwide. The Election Commission of Malaysia (EC) should expand mobile-friendly, multilingual voter-education portals and integrate fact-checking dashboards to reduce misinformation. The Ministry of Education can embed civic-technology modules in schools and universities to cultivate critical engagement.

Government agencies, academic institutions, and NGOs should co-develop a National Digital Civic-Education Blueprint that links media literacy to voting participation, aligning with empirical findings that literacy predicts turnout (Siegel-Stechler et al., 2025). Establishing Young Voters Digital-Governance Councils would institutionalise young voters' input into online campaign regulation and democratic innovation.

Regionally, ASEAN cooperation on exchanges on young voters' digital participation can promote cross-national learning and develop inclusive frameworks for digital democracy (Theocharis & van Deth, 2018).

6.6 Future Research

Building on the validated findings and theoretical integration of this research, future research should pursue multiple avenues to broaden, deepen, and contextualise the understanding of how social media use shapes young voters' political participation. The Integrated Voters' Choice Model has demonstrated explanatory and predictive value in the Malaysian context, yet further refinement is necessary to capture the evolving complexity of digital participation, algorithmic mediation, and socio-cultural variation. The following directions identify key priorities for subsequent research development.

6.6.1 Longitudinal and Comparative Research

A major limitation of existing social-media political-engagement studies is their reliance on cross-sectional data. Longitudinal and panel designs would allow researchers to track the same cohort of young voters across electoral cycles and political events, capturing temporal dynamics such as habit formation, attitude stabilisation, and disengagement. Longitudinal evidence would reveal whether constructs such as Social Media Performance Expectancy (SMPE) and Social Media Hedonic Motivation (SMHM) exert a consistent influence or fluctuate in response to political salience and media innovation (Boulianne & Theocharis, 2020).

Comparative analyses across national and cultural contexts are also vital for advancing the model's external validity. Applying the Integrated Voters' Choice Model in neighbouring Southeast Asian democracies such as Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, and Singapore would enable researchers to assess its cross-cultural robustness and to examine how variations in political regimes, civic norms, and digital infrastructures shape the relationships between social influence, behavioural intention, and voters' choice. Such comparative work would help determine whether Malaysia's young voters' political participation patterns represent a regional trend or a context-specific outcome shaped by post-*Undi18* reforms and the digitalisation of GE 15.

6.6.2 Moderation and Mediation Analyses

Future investigations should probe multi-level mechanisms that connect technology acceptance to political behaviour. Political efficacy, institutional trust, and digital literacy are promising moderators that could strengthen or weaken the path from Social Media Performance Expectancy (SMPE) to Young Voters' Behavioural Intention (YVBI). Scholars can uncover how emotional and contextual variables amplify or dampen the effects of the core constructs of the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) by examining moderated-mediation pathways.

Additionally, the interplay among Social Media Hedonic Motivation (SMHM), Social Media Social Influence (SMSI), and Social Media Facilitating Conditions (SMFC) warrants attention. Testing these constructs jointly can reveal whether enjoyment, peer endorsement, and infrastructural accessibility operate independently or synergistically in driving political participation. These analyses will advance theoretical precision and provide actionable insights for campaign design and civic-education policy.

6.6.3 Habitual and Algorithmic Exposure Studies

The role of Social Media Habit (SMH) requires closer scrutiny, particularly the distinction between passive consumption and active content creation. Continuous exposure to political material can normalise engagement or, conversely, induce fatigue. Future research should employ digital-trace analytics and experience-sampling methods to capture real-time behavioural patterns.

Algorithmic design features such as personalised newsfeeds, recommendation systems, and engagement-based ranking shape not only what users see but also how they perceive political relevance (Ida et al., 2020). Longitudinal exposure studies can assess how such algorithmic curation fosters echo chambers or cross-cutting exposure, influencing political efficacy, emotional polarisation, and vote stability. Moreover, platform-level changes, such as TikTok's "For You" feed or X/Twitter's algorithmic sorting, should be systematically evaluated to understand their cumulative effects on young voters' civic reasoning and participation.

6.6.4 Theoretical Integration and Model Extension

Extending theoretical integration remains essential for conceptual maturity. Future research can merge the Integrated Voters' Choice Model with complementary behavioural frameworks such as the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991), the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), and Social Identity Theory (SIT) (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). These integrations would enable scholars to account for the dimensions of cognitive elaboration, perceived behavioural control, and group identification that the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) alone does not fully explain.

Mixed-method approaches, including digital ethnography, focus groups, and content or discourse analysis, should complement quantitative modelling to illuminate the symbolic, emotional, and narrative processes underlying young voters' political identity formation (Marquart et al., 2020). Employing these designs across different media ecosystems will provide richer insight into how technological affordances interact with socio-psychological mechanisms to produce meaning, motivation, and mobilisation.

Furthermore, moderated-mediation testing can refine the theoretical framework by quantifying how emotional triggers, issue salience, or peer cues magnify or attenuate habitual and contextual influences. Such work would move the field toward more predictive and explanatory models of digital political participation.

6.6.5 Inclusive and Expansive Definitions of Participation

As young voters' civic expression evolves beyond ballot-box voting, future research must adopt broader, multidimensional definitions of participation. Online activism, petitioning, crowdfunding for social causes, and meme-based political discourse now represent substantive political acts within digital cultures (Theocharis & van Deth, 2018). Analysing these alternative forms will capture the affective and expressive dimensions of engagement often overlooked in traditional voter-behaviour models (Fujiwara et al., 2021).

Future studies should also examine political cynicism, peer influence, and media trust as variables shaping these newer modes of engagement (Holbein & Hillygus, 2020; Ng, 2022). Including these factors will ensure that models of young voters' political

behaviour remain relevant amid shifting civic norms and participatory technologies. Importantly, research should recognise intersectionality—how gender, class, ethnicity, and digital access intersect to shape participation opportunities and constraints in online spaces.

6.6.6 Interdisciplinary and Policy-Linked Research

To ensure sustained impact, future scholarship should bridge political communication theory with data science, behavioural economics, and public policy studies. Collaborative projects involving universities, election commissions, and civil society organisations can create shared data infrastructures to monitor young voters' civic trends. Predictive analytics and AI-driven modelling could be employed to identify participation bottlenecks and design evidence-based civic-engagement interventions. This interdisciplinary synergy will enable theoretical advancement to translate into tangible democratic outcomes.

In sum, advancing the Integrated Voters' Choice Model requires longitudinal replication, cross-cultural validation, integrative theorising, and inclusive conceptualisation of participation. Future research can illuminate how social-media ecosystems not only reflect but also reshape the political consciousness of emerging electorates by uniting computational precision with interpretive depth. Such scholarship will contribute both to the theoretical enrichment of digital-political-communication research and to the practical goal of nurturing informed, empowered, and participatory young voters in the digital age.

6.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a comprehensive synthesis of the research's findings, theoretical contributions, methodological applications, practical implications, and directions for future research, offering a conclusive understanding of how social media shapes the political participation of young Malaysian voters. The research set out to explore the interrelationship between technological motivation and political behaviour by integrating the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) (Venkatesh et al., 2012) with the Model of Primary Voter Behaviour (Newman & Sheth, 1985). The resulting Integrated Voters' Choice Model demonstrated that young voters'

adoption of social media for political purposes is not a purely functional activity, but a complex process influenced by cognitive, affective, and social dynamics. The empirical analysis confirmed that performance expectancy, social influence, and hedonic motivation significantly predict young voters' behavioural intention to engage politically on social media. In contrast, facilitating conditions and habit exerted direct influence on voter choice, suggesting that structural support and ingrained online routines shape final voting decisions. The mediation analysis revealed that behavioural intention serves as a crucial conduit, translating social media interaction into electoral behaviour, indicating that when young voters find digital participation purposeful and enjoyable, their intention to act politically becomes stronger. Interestingly, habit did not directly predict behavioural intention, yet the significant moderating effect of experience implies that familiarity and prolonged platform exposure enhance the likelihood of consistent engagement. This finding suggests that habitual behaviour interacts with contextual and experiential factors, paving the way for more nuanced investigation into algorithmic exposure and content personalisation. Collectively, the results confirm that social media functions not only as an informational platform but also as an emotional and social ecosystem where political preferences are cultivated, reinforced, and expressed.

This research makes an original contribution by merging the technology-acceptance and voter-behaviour frameworks into a unified model that captures both the technological affordances and the psychological motivations underlying political participation from a theoretical standpoint. The Integrated Voters' Choice Model provides a theoretically grounded and empirically validated framework that can be applied across disciplines such as political communication, media studies, and behavioural science. The findings extend the boundaries of the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) by situating its constructs, particularly performance expectancy, social influence, and hedonic motivation, within a civic and political context. This theoretical synthesis underscores the importance of integrating affective and identity-based constructs, such as political trust and efficacy, to enhance understanding of technology's role in civic engagement. It also reinforces arguments from contemporary scholars that social media engagement is driven as much by emotion, belonging, and gratification as by information seeking. The model thus contributes to the broader body of knowledge by bridging individual-level technology adoption theories with collective models of political behaviour, demonstrating that

digital participation operates through a blend of cognitive expectations, emotional gratification, and social validation.

Methodologically, the research contributes to political communication research by demonstrating the suitability of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) for analysing complex, mediated, and moderated relationships. Through rigorous validation encompassing reliability, convergent and discriminant validity, and model-fit indices, the research ensured empirical robustness and replicability. Moreover, the integration of moderation and mediation analyses illustrates the value of PLS-SEM in testing interaction effects within multidimensional communication models, paving the way for future scholars to incorporate predictive analytics and digital-trace data into political-behaviour studies. These methodological innovations advance both the technical and practical capacities of political communication research in emerging democracies such as Malaysia.

The practical implications of this research extend to political parties, educators, policymakers, and civic institutions seeking to engage young voters in an increasingly digital political environment. Findings reveal that young voters are more responsive to political content that is interactive, visually appealing, and emotionally resonant. Campaign strategists and political actors are thus encouraged to design platform-specific communication strategies that combine information dissemination with entertainment and peer engagement. Educators and civil society organisations can utilise the Integrated Voters' Choice Model to develop digital civic literacy initiatives that help young voters discern credible information, evaluate persuasive messages, and translate online participation into meaningful offline engagement. The research also underscores the need for policymakers and institutions, such as the Election Commission of Malaysia (EC), to strengthen digital infrastructure, multilingual voter information portals, and media literacy programmes to ensure equitable access to accurate political information. These efforts not only address misinformation but also empower young citizens to navigate political content critically and ethically, aligning with post-*Undi18* civic-education reforms (Siegel-Stechler et al., 2025).

Despite its contributions, the research acknowledges several limitations that delineate its interpretive boundaries. The data were collected in the immediate aftermath of Malaysia's fifteenth general election (GE15), a period of heightened political activity and social media engagement. Consequently, the findings reflect a snapshot of young voters' political behaviour during a unique political moment rather than a longitudinal

pattern. The cross-sectional design restricts causal inference, and the reliance on self-reported survey data may introduce response bias or social desirability effects. Additionally, while the model demonstrated strong explanatory power in the Malaysian context, its generalisability to other national or demographic groups warrants caution. Future replication and comparative studies are needed to test the model's cultural and temporal stability.

In response to these findings and limitations, the chapter presented a series of research recommendations aligned with the four significance domains outlined in Chapter 1. The theoretical recommendations encouraged scholars to adopt and expand the Integrated Voters' Choice Model in diverse political and cultural contexts, integrating constructs such as political trust, efficacy, and algorithmic exposure. The empirical and methodological recommendations advocated the use of validated bilingual instruments, the application of advanced PLS-SEM techniques, and the incorporation of predictive analytics and digital ethnography to capture the emotional and behavioural depth of online participation. The practical recommendations advised political parties and civic educators to employ evidence-based strategies that align with young voters' media consumption habits. In contrast, societal and policy recommendations emphasised institutional collaboration to institutionalise digital civic education and media literacy initiatives. These recommendations collectively transform the research's theoretical contributions into actionable strategies for both academia and practice.

Finally, the proposed future research directions outlined several pathways to deepen this line of inquiry. Scholars are encouraged to pursue longitudinal studies to observe behavioural change across electoral cycles, to conduct cross-national comparisons that test cultural variance, and to examine habitual use and algorithmic exposure as emerging determinants of political participation. Further theoretical integration with frameworks such as the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), and Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) can enrich the explanatory scope of political-participation research. Future research should also expand definitions of participation to include online activism, digital deliberation, and issue-based advocacy, capturing the evolving forms of civic expression in networked publics (Theocharis & van Deth, 2018; Fujiwara et al., 2021). Integrating interdisciplinary approaches from data science to behavioural

policy will ensure that theoretical innovation contributes directly to the democratic empowerment of young voters.

In conclusion, Chapter 6 underscores that this research not only illuminates the motivational and contextual factors driving young voters' political behaviour but also establishes a durable theoretical and methodological foundation for future research. The Integrated Voters' Choice Model encapsulates the intersection of technology, psychology, and civic culture, demonstrating how social media has redefined political participation from a rational act of information processing into an affective, interactive, and identity-driven practice. The research's implications extend beyond Malaysia, offering a replicable framework for understanding digital-era citizenship in other emerging democracies. Ultimately, this research affirms that meaningful democratic participation in the 21st century depends not only on access to digital platforms but on the cultivation of informed, critical, and emotionally connected young citizens who see political participation as an integral part of their digital lives.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1



15TH GENERAL ELECTION SOCIAL MEDIA USE AMONG MALAYSIA YOUNG VOTERS BEHAVIOUR AND ITS IMPACT TOWARDS VOTING CHOICE: A MODEL DEVELOPMENT

Dear Respondent,

This research aims to explore the relationship between social media use and political participation intentions. The expected result is to provide clarity about this issue, which has the potential to lead to significant social change in the political sphere.

We hope you will read and understand each question before answering it in the provided space. Your cooperation is essential for the success of this research. There are no right or wrong answers.

This questionnaire has three sections: the demographics section, social media use behaviour, and voting behaviour.

Thank you for participating in this questionnaire. It only takes 10 minutes to complete, and we appreciate your cooperation.

Thank You.

REC/06/2024 (PG/MR/249)

PART A: DEMOGRAPHIC

Please tick (/) in the relevant box.

1. Gender:

☐	Male
☐	Female

2. Age:

☐	18-20
☐	21-23
☐	24-26
☐	27-29
☐	30-32
☐	33-35
☐	36-38
☐	39-40

3. Level of Education:

☐	SPM
☐	STPM
☐	Diploma
☐	Degree
☐	Master
☐	PhD

4. Race:

☐	Malay
☐	Chinese
☐	India
☐	Others: _____

5. Monthly Income:

☐	Less than RM2, 500.00
☐	RM2, 500.00 - RM4, 849.00
☐	RM4, 850.00 - RM10, 959.00
☐	More than RM10, 960.00

6. Are you a registered voter?

☐	Yes
☐	No

7. Did you vote in the last General Election?

☐	Yes
☐	No

8. Which parliamentary constituency did you vote in:

☐	P092 – Sabak Bernam
☐	P093 – Sungai Besar
☐	P094 – Hulu Selangor
☐	P095 – Tanjung Karang
☐	P096 – Kuala Selangor
☐	P097 – Selayang
☐	P098 – Gombak
☐	P099 – Ampang
☐	P100 – Pandan
☐	P101 – Hulu Langat
☐	P102 – Bangi
☐	P103 – Puchong
☐	P104 – Subang
☐	P105 – Petaling Jaya
☐	P106 – Damansara
☐	P107 – Sungai Buloh
☐	P108 – Shah Alam
☐	P109 – Kapar
☐	P110 – Klang
☐	P111 – Kota Raja
☐	P112 – Kuala Langat
☐	P113 – Sepang

9. How often do you use social media for political information?

☐	Never
☐	Less than 1 hour
☐	2 – 3 hours
☐	4 - 5 hours
☐	6 hours and more

10. Your experience in using social media to search for political information.

☐	Less than 2 years
☐	2 – 3 years
☐	4 - 5 years
☐	More than 5 years

11. Which social media platforms do use most frequently? (Select all that apply)

☐	Facebook
☐	X
☐	Instagram
☐	TikTok
☐	YouTube

PART B: Social Media Acceptance (Venkatesh Thong & Xu, 2012).

INSTRUCTIONS: Please circle (O) the answer that represents the evaluation of the given statement. Choose **ONE** answer to the following five scales.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

As a voter:

No.	Social Media Performance Expectancy (SMPE)	1	2	3	4	5
SMPE1	I find social media useful in my daily life to find more information on politics.	1	2	3	4	5
SMPE2	Using social media to gain knowledge on politics increases my chances of achieving tasks that are important to me.	1	2	3	4	5
SMPE3	Using social media to gain knowledge on politics helps me accomplish results more quickly.	1	2	3	4	5
SMPE4	Using social media increases my knowledge of politics.	1	2	3	4	5
SMPE5	Using social media can help improve the quality of my existing knowledge of politics.	1	2	3	4	5
SMPE6	I will be able to complete my duties to vote more effectively if I use social media for information on politics.	1	2	3	4	5
SMPE7	Social media allows citizens to quickly and easily obtain the information they need.	1	2	3	4	5

No.	Social Media Effort Expectancy (SMEE)	1	2	3	4	5
SMEE1	Learning how to use social media for is easy for me.	1	2	3	4	5
SMEE2	My interaction using social media is clear and understandable.	1	2	3	4	5
SMEE3	I find social media easy to use.	1	2	3	4	5
SMEE4	It is easy for me to become skilful at using social media.	1	2	3	4	5
SMEE5	I believe that I will have knowledge to access and use social media easily.	1	2	3	4	5
SMEE6	I expect the use of social media for political participation is clear and understandable.	1	2	3	4	5
SMEE7	It's easy for me to become proficient in using social media for political participation.	1	2	3	4	5

No.	Social Media Social Influence (SMSI)	1	2	3	4	5
SMSI1	People who are important to me think that I should use social media for political participation.	1	2	3	4	5
SMSI2	People who influence my behaviour think that I should use social media for political participation.	1	2	3	4	5
SMSI3	People whose opinions I value prefer that I use social media for political participation.	1	2	3	4	5
SMSI4	People around me consider it appropriate to use social media for political participation.	1	2	3	4	5
SMSI5	In the view of those who impact my actions, social media can be used effectively for political participation.	1	2	3	4	5
SMSI6	Political discussions with friends contribute to increasing and deepening social relations with individuals.	1	2	3	4	5
SMSI7	I am motivated to engage in political activities on social media by	1	2	3	4	5

	those who influence my life.					
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No.	Social Media Facilitating Conditions (SMFC)	1	2	3	4	5
SMFC1	I have the resources necessary to use social media for political participation.	1	2	3	4	5
SMFC2	I have the knowledge necessary to use social media for political participation.	1	2	3	4	5
SMFC3	Social media is compatible with other technologies I use for political participation.	1	2	3	4	5
SMFC4	I can get help from others when I have difficulties using social media for political participation.	1	2	3	4	5
SMFC5	Social media work well with other platforms I use.	1	2	3	4	5
SMFC6	I have enough Internet experience to use social media for political participation.	1	2	3	4	5
SMFC7	There is no doubt about the government's support for the use of social media in political participation.	1	2	3	4	5

No.	Social Media Hedonic Motivation (SMHM)	1	2	3	4	5
SMHM1	Using social media for political participation is fun.	1	2	3	4	5
SMHM2	Using social media for political participation is enjoyable.	1	2	3	4	5
SMHM3	Using social media for political participation is very entertaining.	1	2	3	4	5
SMHM4	Using social media for political participation is very exciting.	1	2	3	4	5
SMHM5	Using social media for political participation is mentally stimulating for the brain.	1	2	3	4	5
SMHM6	Using social media for political participation is a rewarding experience.	1	2	3	4	5
SMHM7	Using social media for political participation is amusing.	1	2	3	4	5

No.	Social Media Habit (SMH)	1	2	3	4	5
SMH1	The use of the social media has become a habit for me.	1	2	3	4	5
SMH2	I am addicted to using social media.	1	2	3	4	5
SMH3	I must use social media.	1	2	3	4	5
SMH4	Using social media has become natural to me.	1	2	3	4	5
SMH5	I often find myself using social media longer than intended.	1	2	3	4	5
SMH6	I often find life to be boring without social media.	1	2	3	4	5
SMH7	Time passes by without me feeling it when I am using social media.	1	2	3	4	5

No.	Young Voters Behavioural Intention (YVBI)	1	2	3	4	5
YVBI1	I intend to continue using social media for political participation in the future.	1	2	3	4	5
YVBI2	I will always try to use social media for political participation in my daily life.	1	2	3	4	5
YVBI3	I plan to continue to use social media for political participation frequently.	1	2	3	4	5
YVBI4	I will use social media for political participation when I have a need.	1	2	3	4	5
YVBI5	I predict to use social media for political participation in a short time.	1	2	3	4	5
YVBI6	I like to interact with my candidate using social media.	1	2	3	4	5
YVBI7	I like to use social media for political participation.	1	2	3	4	5

PART C: Voters' Choice (Newman & Sheth, 1985.)

INSTRUCTIONS: Please circle (O) the answer that represents the evaluation of the given statement. Choose **ONE** answer to the following five scales.

1	2	3	4	5
<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>

No.	Voting Issues and Policies (VIP)	1	2	3	4	5
VIP1	The candidate I will vote for will be the best person to create job opportunities.	1	2	3	4	5
VIP2	The candidate I will vote for will be the best person to resolve the tax (e.g GST, SST) issues.	1	2	3	4	5
VIP3	The candidate I will vote for will be the best person to resolve issue of inflation.	1	2	3	4	5
VIP4	The candidate I will vote for will be the best person to fight corruption in the country.	1	2	3	4	5
VIP5	The candidate I will vote for will be the best person to stabilize the currency exchange rate.	1	2	3	4	5
VIP6	The candidate I will vote for will be the best person to reduce poverty.	1	2	3	4	5
VIP7	The candidate I will vote for will be the best person to provide quality education.	1	2	3	4	5

No.	Voting Emotional Feelings (VEF)	1	2	3	4	5
VEF1	Voting for my candidate would make me feel patriotic.	1	2	3	4	5
VEF2	Voting for my candidate would make me feel hopeful.	1	2	3	4	5
VEF3	Voting for my candidate would make me feel excited.	1	2	3	4	5
VEF4	Voting for my candidate would make me feel responsible.	1	2	3	4	5
VEF5	Voting for my candidate would make me feel involved.	1	2	3	4	5
VEF6	Voting for my candidate would make me feel optimistic.	1	2	3	4	5
VEF7	Voting for my candidate would make me feel satisfied..	1	2	3	4	5

No.	Voting Candidate Image (VCI)	1	2	3	4	5
VCI1	I will choose the candidate that is honest.	1	2	3	4	5
VCI2	I will choose the candidate that is trustworthy.	1	2	3	4	5
VCI3	I will choose the candidate that is compassionate.	1	2	3	4	5
VCI4	I will choose a candidate that is religious.	1	2	3	4	5
VCI5	I will choose the candidate that is incorruptible.	1	2	3	4	5
VCI6	I will choose the candidate that has a good leadership skill.	1	2	3	4	5
VCI7	I will choose a local candidate.	1	2	3	4	5

No.	Voting Epistemic Issues (VEI)	1	2	3	4	5
VEI1	I am concerned about the future of the nation after the election in terms of citizen cost of living.	1	2	3	4	5
VEI2	I am concerned about the future of the nation after the election in terms of free education.	1	2	3	4	5
VEI3	I am concerned about the future of the nation after the election in	1	2	3	4	5

	terms of improving healthcare.					
VEI4	I am concerned about the future of the nation after the election in terms of women empowerment.	1	2	3	4	5
VEI5	I feel worried if I do not get any incentive from the government (e.g: BSH) anymore.	1	2	3	4	5
VEI6	I feel worried if my candidate is unable to implement their promises according to their party's manifestos.	1	2	3	4	5
VEI7	I feel worried if my candidate is unable to fight for people's welfare.	1	2	3	4	5

No.	Voting Social Imagery (VSI)	1	2	3	4	5
VSI1	I proudly choose a candidate that has professional background.	1	2	3	4	5
VSI2	I find it acceptable if my candidate comes from any religion.	1	2	3	4	5
VSI3	I feel irritated if my candidate is unable to associate himself with young people.	1	2	3	4	5
VSI4	I feel bitter if the candidate displays his sophisticated lifestyle.	1	2	3	4	5
VSI5	I choose a party that represents a single race.	1	2	3	4	5
VSI6	I choose a party that represents a multiracial community.	1	2	3	4	5
VSI7	I do not choose a political party that practices abuse of power.	1	2	3	4	5

No.	Voting Personal Events (VPE)	1	2	3	4	5
VPE1	I would change my vote if the candidate I supported committed a serious crime.	1	2	3	4	5
VPE2	I would change my vote if the candidate I supported lied about events in his / her private life.	1	2	3	4	5
VPE3	I would change my vote if the candidate I supported was involved in a business scandal.	1	2	3	4	5
VPE4	I would change my vote if the candidate I supported was involved in a political scandal.	1	2	3	4	5
VPE5	I would change my vote if the candidate I supported changed his / her stand on an issue.	1	2	3	4	5
VPE6	I would change my vote if the candidate I supported cheated on his tax returns.	1	2	3	4	5
VPE7	I would change my vote if the candidate I supported became too seriously ill to work effectively.	1	2	3	4	5

No.	Voting Current Events (VCE)	1	2	3	4	5
VCE1	The tax issue affected my vote.	1	2	3	4	5
VCE2	The political scandal affected my vote.	1	2	3	4	5
VCE3	The issue of misuse of power by politician affected my vote.	1	2	3	4	5
VCE4	The policies of the previous government had greatly improved the socioeconomic status of the people.	1	2	3	4	5
VCE5	Political stability affected my vote.	1	2	3	4	5
VCE6	I feel scared towards the country's sovereignty due to the influx of foreign workers.	1	2	3	4	5
VCE7	I feel nervous about the future of the country if there is a change in the government after the election.	1	2	3	4	5

End

Thank You

APPENDIX 2

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	UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA
Pejabat Timbalan Naib Canselor (Penyelidikan dan Inovasi)	
Reference	: 600-TNCPI (5/1/6)
Our reference	: REC/06/2024 (PG/MR/249)
Date	: 1445H 14 21 June 2024
Ms Fatimah Yazmin binti Haji Yahaya - 2023404868 (Supervisor: Dr Wardatul Hayat binti Adnan) Faculty of Communications and Media Studies Universiti Teknologi MARA 40450 Shah Alam SELANGOR	
سالم عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته and Greetings	
Ms	
APPROVAL LETTER - UiTM RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE	
Thank you for submitting your research proposal to the Research Ethics Committee (REC). After considering your application, the Committee approved your proposal titled "15 th General Election Social Media Use Among Malaysia Young Voters Behaviour and Its Impact Towards Voting Choice: A Model Development" in Selangor. Details of the approval are as follows:	
Ref. number:	REC/06/2024 (PG/MR/249)
Approval Period:	21 June 2024 until 14 January 2026
Authorised personnel:	1. Fatimah Yazmin binti Haji Yahaya 2. Dr Wardatul Hayat binti Adnan
The UiTM Research Ethics Committee operates in accordance to the ICH Good Clinical Practice Guidelines, Malaysian Good Clinical Practice Guidelines and the Declaration of Helsinki. The approval of this project is conditional upon your continuing compliance with these guidelines and declaration.	
We draw to your attention the requirement that a report on this research, must be submitted every 12 months from the date of the approval or on the completion of the project, whichever occurs first. Failure to submit reports will result in withdrawal of consent for the project to proceed. Amendments, if any, to the study documents are to be submitted to the REC for approval.	
If you require further information, please contact the REC Secretariat at 03-55448089/03-55442794 or email at recsecretariat@uitm.edu.my.	
اوسمها، تقوى، موليا "MALAYSIA MADANI" "BERKHIDMAT UNTUK NEGARA"	
Yours sincerely,	
(EMERITUS PROFESSOR ~~DR~~ DATO' DR RAYMOND AZMAN ALI) Chairman UiTM Research Ethics Committee	
c.c.: Deputy Dean (RI), Faculty of Communications and Media Studies, UiTM	
Universiti Teknologi MARA Aras 3, Bangunan Wawasan 40450 Shah Alam, Selangor, MALAYSIA Tel: (+603) 5544 2004/2255 Faks: (+603) 5544 2070	
	

APPENDIX 3

PLSpredict Results: Indicator-Level RMSE/MAE Comparisons for Each Model

Model	Indicator	Q ² _predict	PLS RMSE	PLS MAE	LM RMSE	LM MAE	IA RMSE	IA MAE	Better Model
UTAUT2-only	YVBI1	0.447	0.589	0.453	0.610	0.463	0.793	0.609	PLS
	YVBI2	0.408	0.674	0.534	0.707	0.526	0.876	0.745	PLS
	YVBI3	0.458	0.640	0.495	0.653	0.490	0.868	0.731	PLS $\approx$ LM
	YVBI6	0.303	0.757	0.595	0.761	0.574	0.907	0.764	PLS $\approx$ LM
	YVBI7	0.427	0.694	0.512	0.685	0.504	0.917	0.741	LM slightly better
N&S-only	Voted	0.024	0.237	0.113	0.244	0.145	0.240	0.115	PLS
Integrated	YVBI1–7	[values as above, same pattern]	...	...	...	...	...	...	Majority PLS better
Integrated	Voted	0.349	0.813	0.635	0.861	0.657	0.974	0.755	PLS

AUTHOR'S PROFILE



Fatimah Yazmin Binti Haji Yahaya holds a Master of Arts in Media and Information Warfare Studies and a Bachelor of Public Relations (Hons) from UiTM. She is a lecturer at the Faculty of Communication and Media Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Melaka. Her teaching portfolio spans propaganda and public opinion, digital storytelling, and public relations writing, aligning with contemporary developments in media literacy and political communication. She has also served in academic leadership roles, including Programme Coordinator for the Bachelor of Public Relations programme, demonstrating commitment to curriculum development and student mentorship. Her scholarly work includes publications on media effects, political communication, digital media practices, public opinion, and youth engagement, with research featured in academic journals and conference proceedings.

LIST OF PUBLICATION:

- Yahaya, F. Y., Adnan, W. H., & Hassan, M. S. (2025). Social Media and Political Engagement: A Study of Malaysian Youth in the 15th General Election. *e-Journal of Media and Society*, 8(2), 78-92.
- Yahaya, F. Y., Hassan, M. S., Azni, Z. M., Hadi, S. N. I. A., Allam, S. N. S., & Ibrahim, N. A. N. (2024). Influence of Social Media on Youth Voting Behaviour: A Systematic Literature Review. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 8(10), 1198-1207.

- Azni, Z. M., Hassan, M. S., Yahaya, F. Y., & Ibrahim, N. A. N. (2025). Relationship between Political Informativeness, Satire, Credibility, and Interactivity towards Attitudes of Young Voters' Voting Decision. *Environment-Behaviour Proceedings Journal*, 10(SI30), 15-22.
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