



## THE EFFECT OF DIGITAL MARKETING THROUGH GEN Z VOTING DECISION IN 2024 ELECTION

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### ABSTRACT

*This study investigates how digital marketing influences the political preferences and engagement of Gen Z voters in Batam City, utilizing Trust as a mediating factor. Employing a quantitative methodology, the research analyzed 304 Gen Z participants selected via purposive sampling using Smart PLS software. The framework evaluates variables such as Social Media Marketing, Influencer Marketing, Advertising, Trust, and the final Voting Decision. The results demonstrate that digital marketing channels significantly bolster Trust, which subsequently drives voting behavior. Furthermore, Trust acts as a vital bridge between online promotional efforts and political choices, suggesting that candidates must prioritize building digital credibility to successfully convert online engagement into offline votes.*

**Keywords:** social media marketing, influencer marketing, advertising, Trust, voting decision

## INTRODUCTION

The development of science and technology encourages various innovations in the use of technological results in daily life. This technology is the main factor that affects globalization. So far, many people have realized and considered that globalization has brought many positive impacts, such as technological advances, ease of communication, and time efficiency in communication (Listiana, 2021). The emergence of the internet is the beginning of unstoppable global connectivity. Through the internet, any individual can connect with anyone in any part of the world and can also open access to unlimited information (Lubis & Nasution, 2023).

In today's digital era, social media is one of the platforms that are most in demand by the public. This is because information conveyed through social media is more accessible, especially by the younger generation. The high level of technological literacy among millennials has shifted their information-seeking behavior, making social media the central hub for their knowledge acquisition (Kuada et al., 2023). Today, almost everything young people are looking for comes from the media, including various social media-based platforms. The technological journey from the agricultural era to the current digital era has brought great changes to the lives of the people, the nation and the state (Muhammad, 2019).

Social media has now become an integral part of people's lives, including in the political realm. Although initially considered less relevant in encouraging the participation of young people, especially young people, recent research shows that social media has great potential to increase political engagement. The pervasive adoption of social media platforms has fundamentally

reshaped the political and communication landscape of political communication, allowing people to access, disseminate, and actively participate in political discourse (Kopti, 2023).

Social media has given candidates and political parties the opportunity to communicate directly with voters without intermediaries. Through platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter), these digital spaces allow for the dissemination of political discourse, the promotion of campaign initiatives, and the facilitation of unmediated engagement with the electorate (Indrawan et al., 2023). The use of social media to promote and disseminate voting-related information, supported by peer influence, has proven to be an effective approach in increasing public participation in the democratic process (Kopti, 2023). Election results can be influenced by social media in a variety of ways. With "social" as the keyword. Social media makes it easy to create knowledge production centers. Due to their widespread use, these centers can eventually develop into major nodes in the flow of information dissemination, generating significant echo chambers on social media (Wang et al., 2020).

The development of social media and information technology today has changed people's perspective on social life, with impacts that can be positive or negative (Doly, 2020). A black campaign is an act that violates political ethics by spreading misleading information, slander, or fake news to damage the image of the opponent. This action can trigger conflicts between supporters, cause hatred, and damage the course of democracy that should take place in a healthy and fair (Fahrudin & Arif, 2023). Black campaigns are often difficult to uncover because the perpetrators are difficult to track. In addition, the absence of clear boundaries in cyberspace makes determining the right type of punishment for perpetrators more

complex and difficult to adjust (Dewanti, 2022).

Based on data obtained from the General Election Commission (KPU), it can be seen that the participation rate of young voters (Gen Z) reaches 15-30%. Although Gen Z is very active on social media, their participation rate in the elections is still relatively low, which shows that there is a gap between online engagement and voter participation. Through platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter), these digital spaces allow for the dissemination of political discourse, the promotion of campaign initiatives, and the facilitation of unmediated engagement with the electorate. With the fact that there is significant potential from young voters in the 2024 election and the fact that they are the age group with the highest level of internet penetration, especially on social media. Likewise, social media influencers are now an overlooked force in elections. With a massive number of followers, they can disseminate information, mobilize voters, and shape public opinion (Yasar et al., 2024).

Research on marketing politics in Indonesia is still limited, especially on research objects that use quantitative methods (Jaya, 2025). The dominance of this approach provides a specific picture, but it is not enough to cover the complexity of marketing politics as a whole. Therefore, it is necessary to develop using quantitative methods in understanding marketing strategies, effectiveness, and political impacts in Indonesia. From a novelty perspective, this research will expand the understanding of how social media marketing strategies can be modified or optimized to contribute more positively to the formation of trust in the context of political marketing. Furthermore, this research intends to investigate potential

moderating variables that may influence the strength or direction of the relationship between social media marketing efforts and voter trust, so that it is expected to offer new insights into how candidates can improve the effectiveness of their digital communications to increase trust.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

According to (Jayadi et al., 2022) the SOR framework, the stimulus (S) is theorized to impact an individual's internal state. Within this model, the organism (O) represents the cognitive and affective mechanisms that mediate the relationship, functioning as a psychological bridge between external stimuli and the resulting individual responses (R). An approach that is based on consumer behavior generates a response (R). These three dimensions show that each environment creates a unique emotional experience for the individual. (Hetharie et al., 2019) added that the subject of environmental psychology is often compared to the concept of stimuli. When in an uncomfortable environment, a person tends to avoid it. Therefore, proximity behavior is influenced by a comfortable environment and has a high level of stimulation.

Social media users are frequently immersed in a diverse array of content generated by individuals from varied socioeconomic backgrounds. Within this digital ecosystem, users often align their perspectives with influential opinion leaders who disseminate original and compelling content, thereby significantly shaping their attitudes and ideological leanings (Hamid et al., 2022). The government generally uses social media to capture people's aspirations related to policy improvement, etc. As previously stated, how citizens assess the truthfulness, timeliness, completeness, and ease of access to information

disseminated through social media platforms can contribute to increasing government legitimacy (Arshad & Khurram, 2020). The people's trust in the government guarantees legitimacy and participation in government programs. Research conducted, (Yuan et al., 2023) shows that people's belief that government social media is in their best interest will increase participation and interaction with government information on social media. This is also reinforced in research conducted by (Echeverría & Mani, 2020; Reinikainen et al., 2020).

H1: Social media marketing has a positive effect on trust

According to (Wasike, 2023), political trust refers to the public's view of government institutions and decision-making processes that are considered reliable, fair, capable, and open. Attractive and persuasive advertising has a plays a pivotal role in establishing and nurturing consumer trust toward a specific brand. (Fernaldo & Roswita, 2020; Sharma et al., 2021). They propose that the value of online advertising depends on one's trust to increase purchase intent. The media plays an important role in shaping certain situations and significantly influences individual beliefs (Abadi et al., 2021).

H2: Advertising has a positive effect on trust

Influencer marketing and purchase intent that are theoretically influenced by trust. According to (Yuon & Kim, 2021), influencer marketing plays a huge role in making marketing more effective and also building consumer trust. Previous studies have also revealed that customer trust in influencers has a positive effect on their purchasing decisions (Fairuzamily & Silitonga, 2021). Based on research that has been determined by (Aldi & Adisaputra, 2024; Durmaz et al., 2023; Sumanti et al., 2024) that influencer marketing has a positive effect on consumer trust.

H3: Influencer marketing has a positive effect on trust

Political trust can be interpreted as citizens' trust in the political system, political actors, values, and institutions in society (Holum, 2023). Research researched by (Mauk, 2022) shows that defeat in politics can affect the level of political trust, but the effect depends on how well the quality of the election is conducted. If the election has high integrity and is conducted freely and fairly, the impact on political trust can be different. (Goovaerts & Marien, 2020) Researchers estimate that trust in politicians will be most affected, but there is also a follow-up effect. Judging one politician can also influence people's views of the political system. This is supported by previous research researched by (Alvarez et al., 2021; Weinberg, 2022). H4: Trust has a positive effect on voting decisions

The internet and social media platforms exert a profound influence on contemporary social dynamics and political engagement, empowering individuals to both shape and sway public discourse. Furthermore, these digital tools significantly enhance campaign efficacy and the strategic dissemination of political intelligence (Halomoan et al., 2023). In the study (Suryani & Irsyad, 2022), before making a voting decision, consumers generally look for information about the candidate they want to vote through social media. Therefore, the use of social media as a marketing platform has a great impact on consumer purchasing decisions. This is in line with research conducted by (Purwianti & Suryani, 2021; Siboro et al., 2024). According to (Alim et al., 2024), voters may change their choice after knowing the latest information about the candidate's and party's positions, which suggests that campaigns have the potential to influence their decisions according to empirical findings.

H5: Social media marketing has a positive effect on voting decisions through trust

According to (Fernaldo & Roswita, 2020) Trust, acting as a mediating variable, serves a critical function in bridging digital marketing efforts with final purchase decisions. This relationship suggests that fluctuations in consumer buying behavior are heavily predicated on the prevailing level of consumer confidence. Political advertisements are considered effective in attracting the attention of prospective voters because they contain various promises offered. Through these advertisements, voters can find out the candidates' visions, missions, backgrounds, and achievements that have been achieved (Syarif & Wahyuti, 2024). This is also supported by research conducted by (Jaya, 2025; Yamin & Nurfadilah, 2024). According to (Putra, 2020) person's actions in deciding whether or not to participate in elections are a reflection of the voting behavior of the person concerned.

H6: Advertising has a positive effect on voting decisions through trust

According to (Arshad & Khurram, 2020) government-run social media facilitates direct interaction between citizens and government agencies, while facilitating access to accurate and up-to-date information, which directly increases citizens' trust. Influencer marketing, which utilizes influential individuals to recommend products, has been shown to increase consumer purchase intent, especially articularly when bolstered by significant levels of perceived trustworthiness in the underlying communication channels (Supriadi, 2023). In the study (Reinikainen et al., 2020) it is stated that influencers are now increasingly recognized globally for their impact as social and political commentators, agenda setters, and even role models. The mass media has reported a lot on how these influencers are not only

observers, but also actively participate in various political debates. This is supported by research conducted by (Ajina, 2019; Putri & Wibawa, 2023).

H7: Influencer marketing has a positive effect on voting decisions through trust

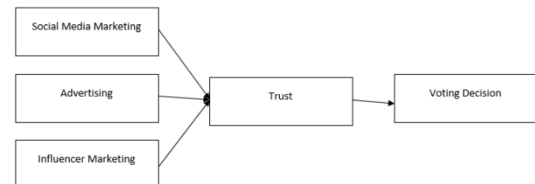


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework Model

Source: Author (2024)

## METHODS

This study uses a quantitative approach, which allows researchers to measure variables numerically and analyze data with statistics to obtain objective results. This method was chosen because it provides the ability to generalize findings from the sample to a wider population, so that the results of the study can be applied more widely. The population in this study is residents living in Kepri (Riau Islands), while the sample used is Gen Z residents in Batam, because they are an active group and have critical thinking, and can provide relevant views on the issues being researched. Sampling will be carried out by This study utilizes a purposive sampling technique, selecting participants who meet specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. The sample size is calculated based on the total population parameters and the target confidence level to ensure the statistical validity of the findings.

Data will be collected through a questionnaire distributed through Google Form to Gen Z in Batam using the Likert Scale to measure respondents' perceptions, where each answer will be scored. This questionnaire is designed to measure variables relevant to the research objectives. After the questionnaire is

collected, the data will be analyzed using statistical software, namely Smart PLS. The author followed the method of (Hair et al., 2019) in assessing the completeness of the questionnaire, an adequate sample size is determined by multiplying the number of questions (24) multiplied by 10, so that 240 respondents are needed. The total number of respondents obtained in this study was 304 respondents.

## RESULTS

Table 1. Respondent Profile

| Variable                                                       | Indicator   | Frequency |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-----------|
| Gender                                                         | Male        | 166       |
|                                                                | Female      | 138       |
| Age                                                            | 17-18       | 58        |
|                                                                | 19-20       | 119       |
|                                                                | 21-22       | 71        |
|                                                                | 23-24       | 35        |
|                                                                | 25-26       | 6         |
|                                                                | >27         | 15        |
| Education                                                      | SMP         | 7         |
|                                                                | SMA/SMK     | 255       |
|                                                                | Diploma     | 11        |
|                                                                | S1          | 29        |
|                                                                | S2          | 2         |
| Religion                                                       | Islam       | 70        |
|                                                                | Kristen     | 52        |
|                                                                | Katolik     | 37        |
|                                                                | Buddha      | 137       |
|                                                                | Hindu       | 1         |
|                                                                | Konghucu    | 7         |
| Salary                                                         | <4.5 IDR    | 155       |
|                                                                | 4.5-8 IDR   | 119       |
|                                                                | 8-11.5 IDR  | 18        |
|                                                                | 11.5-15 IDR | 4         |
|                                                                | >15 IDR     | 8         |
| Which social media platforms have you been using a lot lately? | Instagram   | 160       |
|                                                                | Facebook    | 16        |
|                                                                | Tiktok      | 66        |
|                                                                | Youtube     | 46        |
|                                                                | Twitter     | 16        |

Source: Author (2025)

Based on the table 1, analysis of the 304 collected responses using SPSS reveals a demographic profile predominantly composed of males (54.6%). The sample is characterized by a strong representation of the younger generation, specifically those aged 19–20, who account for 39.10% of the total. Educationally, the vast majority (83.90%)

are high school or vocational graduates. In terms of religious background, Buddhism is the most prevalent (45.10%), followed by Islam (23%). Economically, over half of the participants (51%) earn less than 4.5 million, indicating a lower-to-middle income bracket. Furthermore, Instagram stands out as the primary social media platform, utilized by 52.63% of respondents, significantly ahead of TikTok and YouTube.

The reliability and validity of the questionnaire were assessed through a multi-stage process. The initial step involved evaluating variables based on factor loading values and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Only variables with a factor loading exceeding 0.708 were retained, while those falling below this threshold were eliminated. As illustrated in Table 2, all indicator loadings exceeded the threshold of 0.708, thereby establishing individual item reliability. Furthermore, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for all constructs surpassed the recommended theoretical limit of 0.5. These results indicate that each construct accounts for more than half of its items' variance, confirming the convergent validity of the measurement model.

Table 2. Measurement Model

| Indicator | Factor Loading | Standard deviation | VIF   | Cronbach alpha | Composite reliability (rho_a) | AVE   |
|-----------|----------------|--------------------|-------|----------------|-------------------------------|-------|
| SMM1      | 0,771          | 0,97               | 1,84  | 0,812          | 0,871                         | 0,656 |
| SMM2      | 0,817          | 1,002              | 1,99  |                |                               |       |
| SMM3      | 0,834          | 1,061              | 1,849 |                |                               |       |
| SMM4      | 0,775          | 1                  | 2,304 |                |                               |       |
| SMM5      | 0,762          | 0,985              | 2,303 |                |                               |       |
| AD1       | 0,755          | 0,909              | 1,583 | 0,857          | 0,813                         | 0,64  |
| AD2       | 0,786          | 0,903              | 1,798 |                |                               |       |
| AD3       | 0,843          | 0,993              | 1,846 |                |                               |       |

|     |       |       |       |       |       |       |
|-----|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| AD4 | 0,837 | 1,014 | 1,599 |       |       |       |
| IM1 | 0,769 | 0,979 | 1,706 | 0,869 | 0,864 | 0,636 |
| IM2 | 0,82  | 1,138 | 1,77  |       |       |       |
| IM3 | 0,792 | 0,977 | 1,761 |       |       |       |
| IM4 | 0,829 | 1,004 | 2,331 |       |       |       |
| IM5 | 0,838 | 1,041 | 2,23  |       |       |       |
| TR1 | 0,82  | 0,95  | 2,108 | 0,874 | 0,879 | 0,667 |
| TR2 | 0,876 | 0,911 | 2,822 |       |       |       |
| TR3 | 0,852 | 0,924 | 2,37  |       |       |       |
| TR4 | 0,769 | 0,904 | 1,881 |       |       |       |
| TR5 | 0,758 | 0,938 | 1,668 |       |       |       |
| VD1 | 0,757 | 0,982 | 1,631 | 0,847 | 0,849 | 0,621 |
| VD2 | 0,786 | 0,926 | 1,746 |       |       |       |
| VD3 | 0,783 | 1,091 | 1,805 |       |       |       |
| VD4 | 0,841 | 0,977 | 2,134 |       |       |       |
| VD5 | 0,77  | 0,991 | 1,705 |       |       |       |

Furthermore, the commonly accepted threshold for Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values is  $<5$ . A VIF of 5 or higher indicates significant multicollinearity issues, which may suggest potential Common Method Variance bias. In Table 2, the VIF values for all variable relationships are well below the threshold of 5. These values range from 1.000 to 2.654, indicating that there are no significant multicollinearity concerns within this model. In accordance with the Fornell-Larcker criterion, discriminant validity is confirmed when the square root of the AVE for each latent variable exceeds its highest correlation with any other construct. The results presented in Table 3 demonstrate that the square roots of the AVE are all above 0.78, comfortably surpassing the maximum inter-construct correlation of 0.75.

Table 3. Fornel Larcker Criterion

| Indicator | AD    | IM    | SMM   | TRU   | VD    |
|-----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| AD_       | 0,8   |       |       |       |       |
| IM_       | 0,703 | 0,798 |       |       |       |
| SMM_      | 0,725 | 0,638 | 0,81  |       |       |
| TRU_      | 0,727 | 0,701 | 0,643 | 0,816 |       |
| VD        | 0,713 | 0,725 | 0,633 | 0,75  | 0,788 |

Table 4. R-square

| Indicator | R-square | R-square adjusted |
|-----------|----------|-------------------|
| TRU_      | 0,609    | 0,606             |
| VD        | 0,563    | 0,562             |

The R-square table above is utilized to examine the influence of social media marketing and trust on voting decision, advertising and trust on voting decision, as well as influencer marketing and trust on voting decision. Based on the data on table 4, the R-square value for the trust variable is 0.609 (61%), while the R-square value for the voting decision variable is 0.563 (56%).

Table 5. F-square

| Indicator   | Original sample (O) | Category |
|-------------|---------------------|----------|
| AD_ -> TRU_ | 0,139               | Medium   |
| IM_ -> TRU_ | 0,137               | Medium   |
| SMM_ ->     | 0,026               | Medium   |
| TRU_ -> VD  | 1,288               | Large    |

Regarding the f-square ( $f^2$ ) effect size, a higher value indicates a more significant relationship within the research model. The classification is as follows: values around 0.02 are considered small, 0.15 are medium, and values exceeding 0.35 are considered large. Based on Table 5, it can be concluded that the relationships of advertising to trust, influencer marketing to trust, and social media marketing to trust are categorized as medium. Meanwhile, the influence of

trust on voting decision is categorized as large, as the value is significantly above the 0.35 threshold.

Table 6. Hypothesis Testing

| Hypothesized relation | Path Coefficient | T value  | P value | Decisions |
|-----------------------|------------------|----------|---------|-----------|
| SMM->TRU              | 0,152            | 2,174**  | 0,030   | Supported |
| AD->TRU               | 0,379            | 5,271**  | 0,000   | Supported |
| IM->TRU               | 0,337            | 5,517**  | 0,000   | Supported |
| TRU->VD               | 0,750            | 27,738** | 0,000   | Supported |
| SMM->TRU->VD          | 0,285            | 2,141**  | 0,032   | Supported |
| AD->TRU->VD           | 0,253            | 5,115**  | 0,000   | Supported |
| IM->TRU->VD           | 0,114            | 5,433**  | 0,000   | Supported |

The results of the hypothesis testing in this study are examined through T-values and P-values. A hypothesis is accepted if it has a T-value  $\geq 1.96$  and a P-value  $\leq 0.05$ . Based on the analysis output, the conclusions are as follows:

H1: Social Media Marketing has a positive and significant influence on Trust. Based on the data testing, H1 is accepted as it demonstrates a positive sample mean, a significant T-value of 2.174 ( $> 1.96$ ), and a P-value of 0.03 ( $< 0.05$ ). This aligns with the hypothesis of development stating that social media users are frequently exposed to content that potentially influences their attitudes. Furthermore, how citizens evaluate information on social media can enhance government legitimacy, as stated by (Hamid et al., 2022; Arshad & Khurram, 2020). This study also illustrates that many Gen Z individuals currently place high levels of trust based solely on social media marketing.

H2: Advertising has a positive and significant influence on Trust. Based on the data testing, H2 is accepted due to its positive sample mean (0.376), a significant T-value of 5.271 ( $> 1.96$ ), and a P-value of 0.000 ( $< 0.05$ ). This is

consistent with the explanation that attractive and persuasive advertisements play a crucial role in building voter trust toward the advertised information or candidates/parties by (Fernaldo & Roswita, 2020). The value of online advertising itself highly depends on an individual's trust to enhance voting decisions (Sharma et al., 2021). In general, the media plays a vital role in shaping specific situations and significantly influencing individual beliefs (Abadi et al., 2021). This indicates that relevant and transparent political advertising can effectively build trust among Gen Z.

H3: Influencer Marketing has a positive and significant influence on Trust. Based on the data testing, H3 is accepted with a positive sample mean (0.335), a significant T-value of 5.517 ( $> 1.96$ ), and a P-value of 0.000 ( $< 0.05$ ). This finding is supported by various studies stating that influencer marketing plays a massive role in making marketing more effective and building voter trust (Yuan & Kim, 2021). Voter trust in influencers positively influences their voting decisions (Fairuzamily & Silitonga, 2021), and previous research, such as (Sumanti et al., 2024), has also established that influencer marketing has a positive influence on voter trust.

H4: Trust has a positive and significant influence on Voting Decision. Based on the data testing, H4 is accepted with a positive sample mean (0.752), a significant T-value of 27.738 ( $> 1.96$ ), and a P-value of 0.000 ( $< 0.05$ ). This result reinforces the concept that political trust is the confidence citizens have in the political system, political actors, values, and existing institutions in society (Holum, 2023). Research also shows that the impact on political trust can vary depending on the quality of election implementation (Mauk, 2022), and trust in politicians can influence perspectives on the political system (Goovaerts & Marien,

2020). This indicates that the trust Gen Z has in candidates, or the system is crucial in driving them to participate in elections.

H5: Trust significantly mediates the positive relationship between Social Media Marketing and Voting Decision. Based on the mediation data testing, H5 is accepted as it shows a significant indirect effect of social media marketing on voting decisions through trust, with a T-value of 2.141 ( $> 1.96$ ) and a P-value of 0.032 ( $< 0.05$ ). The internet and social media have a profound influence on public political engagement and allow individuals to shape public opinion (Halomoan et al., 2023). Voters generally seek information about candidates and issues they wish to vote for through social media before making a decision (Suryani & Irsyad, 2022), which is consistent with research by (Siboro et al., 2024). This confirms that the use of social media as a marketing platform significantly impacts voting decisions, mediated by the trust built.

H6: Trust significantly mediates the positive relationship between Advertising and Voting Decision. Based on the mediation data testing, H6 is accepted as a significant indirect influence of advertising on voting decisions mediated by trust was found, with a T-value of 5.115 ( $> 1.96$ ) and a P-value of 0.000 ( $< 0.05$ ). Trust as a mediating variable plays an important role in the relationship between digital marketing and voting decisions, indicating that changes in voting decisions are highly influenced by the level of voter trust (Oktaviani et al., 2022). Political advertisements are deemed effective in attracting potential voters' attention and exposing candidates' visions and missions (Syarif & Wahyuti, 2024), supported by research such as (Jaya, 2025). This shows that political ads that build trust will be more effective in influencing Gen Z's voting decisions.

H7: Trust significantly mediates the positive relationship between Influencer

Marketing and Voting Decision. Based on the mediation data testing, H7 is accepted as it indicates that trust significantly mediates the relationship between Influencer Marketing and voting decisions, with a T-value of 5.433 ( $> 1.96$ ) and a P-value of 0.000 ( $< 0.05$ ). Influencer marketing has been proven to drive voter decisions, especially when supported by a high level of trust in the information source (Supriadi, 2023). Furthermore, influencers are increasingly recognized globally for their impact as social and political commentators and agenda setters (Reinikainen et al., 2020). This confirms that the role of influencers extends beyond mere marketing; they actively participate in political debates, and the trust they build is highly influential in Gen Z's voting decisions.

## LIMITATIONS

This research possesses several primary limitations. The geographic scope is restricted to Generation Z in Batam, which may limit the validity of generalizing the results to a broader population. The specific focus on the twenty twenty-four General Election constrains its applicability to future electoral contexts that may differ. As a quantitative study, there may be limitations in capturing the complex qualitative nuances of voting decisions. Furthermore, the use of purposive sampling and self-report questionnaires potentially introduces data bias, despite being aimed at capturing an active and critical Generation Z demographic.

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