

Abstract

This article investigates the link between media political campaigns and candidate performance. The study's primary purpose was to determine whether there was a link between political candidates' media-political campaigns and their overall performance. The paper used a survey method in which respondents were given questionnaires to fill out in order to attain this goal. A purposive sample strategy was used to select 75 participants from various political parties. The data was analyzed and presented using descriptive statistics and basic regression correlation. Simple linear regression was used to test if mass media significantly predicted the political efficacy of voters. The overall regression was statistically significant ($R^2 = .309$, $F=34.120$; $p < 0.01$). It was found that mass media campaigns significantly predicted voters' political efficacy $\beta = .564$, $p < 0.01$. This shows that the media had an influence on political efficacy. Furthermore, it was revealed that mass media significantly predicted performance of candidates ($R^2 = .391$; $F=48.603$; $p < 0.01$), which proposes the mass media had influence on candidates' performance ($\beta = .632$; $p < 0.01$). The study also discovered that social media significantly predicted candidates' performance ($R^2 = 0.554$; $F= 51.015$; $p < 0.01$). This shows that candidates' performance was influenced by social media. The conclusion is that media political campaigns have an important role in influencing a candidate's election performance. The government should invest more resources in ensuring that all voters and political candidates have equal access to the media and social media platforms in order to deepen democratic processes in which candidates advertise their views and pledges to the public and encourage them to vote for them in elections.

Key Words: Media political campaigns; political efficacy, performance of candidates in elections

Introduction

In a democratic society, holding a periodic general election is one of the most basic processes that allow citizens to pick who will govern them. It includes procedures that take place before, during, and after elections, in which the media has developed into a modern tool for expanding democracy's participatory and mobilizing platform, in which people are persuaded to participate. Candidates who declare their intention to run for political office during elections engage in a political campaign by delivering public speeches through, political rallies, television, and radio speeches in order to influence voters to cast ballots for them. (Benoit, 2017; Denter, 2013). Corona Virus (COVID-19) outbreaks in Wuhan, one of China's major cities, and subsequent spread to other countries changed campaign techniques (Chirwa et.al. 2020). As a result, in order to have secure democratic elections free of fear to contract and spread of COVID-19, many countries have had to implement medically proven measures such as keeping social distance, minimizing the number of people attending political rallies, and wearing masks among others during the election process. (Birch et.al. 2020; Lee, 2020). In this regard, as part of its Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), the Electoral Commission restricted open rally political campaigns that drew large crowds throughout the election period. Unlike the past open rally political campaigns, COVID-19 forced electoral organizations to urge political candidates to use more media choices to reach voters with little personal interactions. Due to concerns that people would contract the disease if they were allowed to attend in large numbers, political candidates were initially only allowed to hold rallies for 70 people, although this was eventually increased to a maximum of 200. As a result,

candidates had limited direct access to potential voters, to whom they were to carry out their political campaign.

According to Trent et.al. (2019), A political campaign is a concerted effort by political candidates to persuade voters to change their minds. It can also be defined as the art and science of structuring and transmitting well-thought-out and packaged political information intended to persuade voters. According to these definitions, a political campaign entails the use of verbal expressions or symbols to elicit shared feelings that lead to physical and psychological acceptance by both the political actor delivering the message and the receiver. Mass media, on the other hand, are communication channels such as radios, television, and newspapers, among others, via which messages are transferred from sender to receiver (Sanyaolu et.al 2017). While, political efficacy is a psychological resource that can help people reduce or eliminate the costs of participating in democratic political processes due to a lack of sufficient political information (Borhan-Eddine et al., 2020). Internal and external efficacy are two aspects of political efficacy. "Internal political efficacy refers to an individual's expectations about the impact he or she will have on the political process as a result of actions of (his or her) own abilities and self-confidence, or the abilities and self-confidence of others in a like circumstance,". While external political efficacy is the belief that a citizen's behavior will elicit a response from government institutions in the political process, or the feeling of being effective when participating in politics (Sullivan and Riedel 2001). A lack of basic understanding about the candidates running for office in an election, for example, may make it difficult to vote for them.

It's worth noting that politicians rely on their capacity to enhance voters' awareness of their political agendas provided to them during election campaigns. Therefore, political campaigns can help voters obtain a better awareness of the candidates' positions and interests, allowing them to make an informed decision in elections. (Stier et.al. 2018). It also encourages people to engage in political activities like voting, campaigns, membership in political parties, and voter registration. Political candidates who are vying for public office, according to Gulzar (2021), win elections by utilizing effective persuasive campaigns to sell their ideas to the public. He adds that people choose candidates based on a wide range of issues that candidates communicate to them through various campaign platforms. The 2021 general elections, on the other hand, sparked interest and debate over the role of media political campaigns, as candidates vying for various political offices at the national and local levels were encouraged to take advantage of it. Even though political candidates barely had free campaigns to reach out to voters (Ngubwagye, 2020), political campaigns are crucial in molding electorates' attitudes and behaviors toward electoral activities (Johann, 2018). This motivated this study to look into whether media-political campaigns boosted voters' political efficacy and influenced candidates' performance in elections because media is useful in civic education.

Theoretical Framework

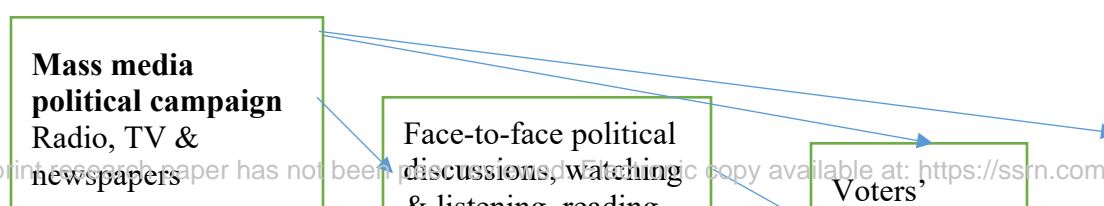
Politics, according to Morgenthau, is primarily a struggle for power (Zhang, 2017). In this sense, electoral politics in a democratic society is primarily a mechanism that allows many political players to exercise their democratic rights, such as political parties, pressure groups, and people, to name a few. Individuals can compete for political power, express their opinions on problems that impact them, evaluate their leaders, and hold them accountable through it. As a result,

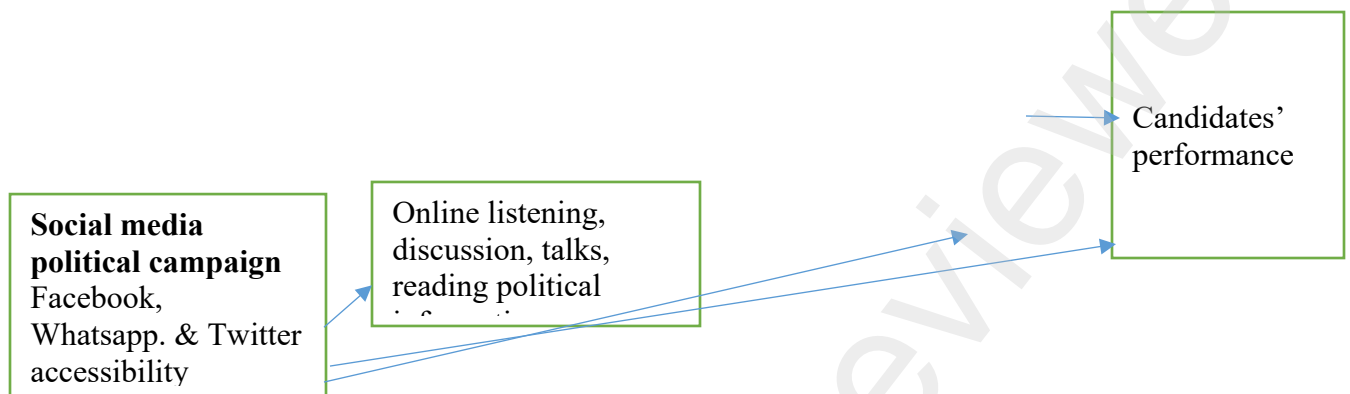
elections are a critical lens through which voters can reach a social agreement with their leaders. To generate voter support, potential political candidates use mass media, social media, and traditional political rally campaigns. The campaign process entails a flow of information from candidates to voters, who express their preferences. Against this, this paper used Benoit's (2017) Functional Theory of Campaign Discourse and Dudek and Partacz's Functional Theory of Campaign Discourse (2009). According to the theory, voting is a comparative act in which candidates must set themselves apart from their opponents. This means that political campaign statements assist politicians in standing out; candidates create preferability by praising, criticizing, and defending; campaign speech is separated into two categories: policy and character (Ibid). The theory contends that media political campaign messages change and raise people's knowledge and interest in political actions such as voting in this regard. Political candidates, according to Menon (2009), construct and formulate their campaign message based on their understanding of the needs of the target audience (voters) and the desired response to support their candidacy. Candidates for political office explain how their policies will benefit voters' interests and needs if they vote for them. As a result, a candidate must be extremely sophisticated in order to package political campaign messages in such a way that they appropriately appeal to voters' wants in order to persuade them that their desired demands will be met.

Furthermore, according to the notion, a candidate's character, such as honesty, intelligence, and integrity, as seen in their political campaigns, informs voters about their leadership capacity. Furthermore, political politicians acquire people's support by ensuring that their manifestos reflect the views of voters on subjects that impact them. Candidates sell their ideas to voters in order to persuade them that they fulfill their needs. As a result, political candidates try to persuade voters to like what they have to offer. The idea goes on to explain that politicians tailor their political campaign messages in response to public requests. Furthermore, the idea highlights that political candidates should remember that their political campaign themes are all about persuading voters that, if elected, they will properly serve their interests. (Benoit, 2017). On the basis of these arguments, political candidates write manifestoes with a passionate compelling message to communicate to voters through numerous media channels in order to get their support. The mainstream media and social media are examples of these channels, which they use to convince voters during political campaigns.

Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework





Source: adapted from Intyaswati et.al. (2020) and modified by the researcher

The conceptual framework depicts the relationship between media political campaigns, such as mass media and social media, and candidate performance. This is mediated by voters and political actors interacting through the media, in-person, and online. It is based on the ideas of functional political campaign discourse theory, which states that political information gained through the media can help individuals make better voting decisions. It is assumed that when voters interact with politicians on a citizen-to-citizen level in politics through various channels of communication, it is hypothesized that they obtain sufficient information about the political system and leaders which they can use in political decision making like voting. Against this, the following hypotheses were pursued:

H₁ voters' political efficacy is positively associated with candidates' performance in elections.

H₂: Mass media political campaign is positively associated with candidates' performance in elections.

H₃: Social media political campaign is positively associated with candidates' performance in elections.

Literature Review

Citizens' political efficacy is strongly influenced by online political engagement, which allows citizens to participate in democratic political activities, according to Ahmad, Alvi, and Ittefaq (2019). People can increase their political efficacy by gaining access to political expressions in the media, such as social media, according to Borhan-Eddine et al. (2020). They emphasized the importance of social media in increasing active citizen participation in politics. They also asserted that having access to political information through the media helped in the development of civic skills, strengthened social bonds, and influenced social and political debates. Other studies like Anim et.al. (2019) have stressed similar view that using social media to disseminate political information and campaigns increased social media users' political efficacy and involvement.

Candidates that use a variety of campaign channels in their political campaigns are regarded to have a better chance of gaining support from potential voters. This is supported by a large body of empirical evidence, such as the findings of Giebler et al. (2017), who discovered that information obtained by voters through various campaign channels from candidates seeking political office is

critical in influencing their voting habits in democratic elections. Furthermore, political candidates' information obtained indirectly through the media provides voters with vital knowledge that helps them to make informed decisions in a competitive electoral process (Ibid). Political campaigns have now migrated to the internet, with politicians using social media to communicate their manifestos and interact with voters in order to persuade them to vote for them in elections (Sajid, 2015).

In a related study, Lambe and Omar (2020) discovered that social media messages had a strong association with political engagement, showing that effectively mobilizing and reaching voters through mass media can impact their participation in the election. Similarly, Dzisah, (2020); Blassnig et al. (2018) argue that media offer political actors a platform through which they can communicate with voters and influence their opinions by using populist political campaign messages. Larsson (2019) makes a similar argument, claiming that the political messaging politicians utilize in various mediums, such as social media, has varied effects on voters. For instance, According to Azi-Lev-on (2019), political messages communicated to voters via mobile phones during an election had a negligible impact on them. On the other hand, according to Rossini et al. (2018), the usage of digital platforms such as Facebook and Twitter helps candidates reach out to voters in a smart way. They emphasized that candidates were free to create a specialized message for a specific group of voters in order to catch their attention. This shows that how political messages are presented to voters can have an impact on their emotional responses. As a result, political candidates make every effort to put themselves in the best light possible in comparison to their opponents (Dudek and Partacz, 2009). Arguably, the media is critical to the deepening and improvement of democracy because it disseminates political information to the general public and allows political candidates in reaching out to potential voters during election campaigns. Another study by

Furthermore, Kleinnijenhuis et al. (2019); Stockwell (2005) suggest that political candidates seeking elected office win elections through successful persuasive communication, in which they advertise their ideas to voters through mass media. They emphasize that voters choose politicians based on a variety of concerns that they encounter with them during political activities such as campaigns (Ibid). This demonstrates the significance and utility of an open rally campaign. For Ijon and Bingab (2020); Sahly et.al. (2019) social media platforms including Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp were crucial venues for political candidates to strategically deliver their campaign messages to voters. Sanyaolu et.al (2017), stressing a similar view stated that using mass media in political campaigns brings candidates closer together and allows them to reach a bigger number of voters more quickly, as well as that their political statements shared on social media generate and multiply networks. Another study by Ahmad et al. (2019) discovered that social media was a political socializing instrument that disseminated political knowledge and information, resulting in people becoming more conscious of the need to participate in and make political decisions.

In Uganda, Tayeebwa (2016) discovered that citizens' use of social media was critical in gaining access to their political leaders to discuss issues of national importance; it provided information to enrich citizens' knowledge for decision-making, as well as fostering citizen networking for a common cause. He emphasizes that the mass media and social media platforms such as Facebook

and Twitter were dependable sources of information as well as places for Ugandans to discuss relevant issues. He concluded that social media served as a medium for socialization and promoted community cohesion. According to studies by Aine (2016), Kiranda, Mugisha, and Ojok (2016), Kamp, Messerschmidt, and Rugambwa (2016), and Ashley (2017), social media exposure influenced voters' decision-making and overall political engagement. However, on the contrary, Intyaswati et al. (2020) discovered that mass media such as television, social media, and newspapers have little effect on people's political understanding. Earlier studies by Boulton and Roberts (2011), found that an attempt to give political candidates the opportunity to have their debates aired in order to gain voter support had little impact. This shows that media political campaigns may not be an effective way for political candidates' ideas to be thoroughly assessed by voters for the elective post they seek during elections.

Methodology

During the post-immediate time following the general election, a questionnaire was distributed to a purposively selected sample of 75 registered voters who held leadership roles in their respective political parties and were actively involved in the January 14, 2021, general election. The study employed a descriptive and correlation research approach to further evaluate and show the relationship between the media campaign and candidates' performance (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). Both secondary and primary data were used in the inquiry. Primary data was collected from registered voters across the party spectrum i.e. the National Resistance Movement, the Forum for Democratic Change, the Democratic Party, the Alliance for National Transformation, the Justice Forum, and the National Unity Platform. The investigation was limited to these parties because they were the most engaged political participants, the sample was set at this level. Respondents were visited at the headquarters of their political party and requested to fill out the questionnaire after being informed of the study's objective. The survey included questions about media election campaigns and political efficacy. In order to examine the relationship between media political campaigns and candidate performance in the 2021 general election, a seven-item measure was employed to capture respondents' perspectives on the role of media in influencing political candidate performance. This was done on basis of the literature reviewed. This focused on traditional media (radio, television, and newspapers) on the one hand, and social media on the other (Facebook, Whatsapp). Purposive sampling was used to select 15 participants from each political party represented in the study to ensure fair representation. This technique of selection was chosen in order to include representatives from various political parties. A total of 90 questionnaires were given to the respondents, with an equal number from each political party. This research looked into whether there was a link between candidate performance and voter political efficacy and the use of media in political campaigns. Simple regression analysis was used to test hypotheses.

Presentation and Discussion of the Study Findings

A total of 75 questionnaires were returned, accounting for 83.3 percent of the total number distributed, and 16.7% were completed. This was a sufficient response rate for the researcher to

examine and draw conclusions. However, the findings may not be indicative of all registered voters who voted in the election because the study's sample consisted mostly of a few members of the respective parties.

Table 1: Questionnaire Distribution

Party affiliation	No of the questionnaires distributed	No of the questionnaires returned	%
JEEMA	15	5	6.7
NUP	15	19	25.3
NRM	15	23	30.7
DP	15	11	14.7
FDC	15	13	17.3
ANT	15	04	5.3
Total	90	75	100.0

Figure 2: Summary of Response Rate

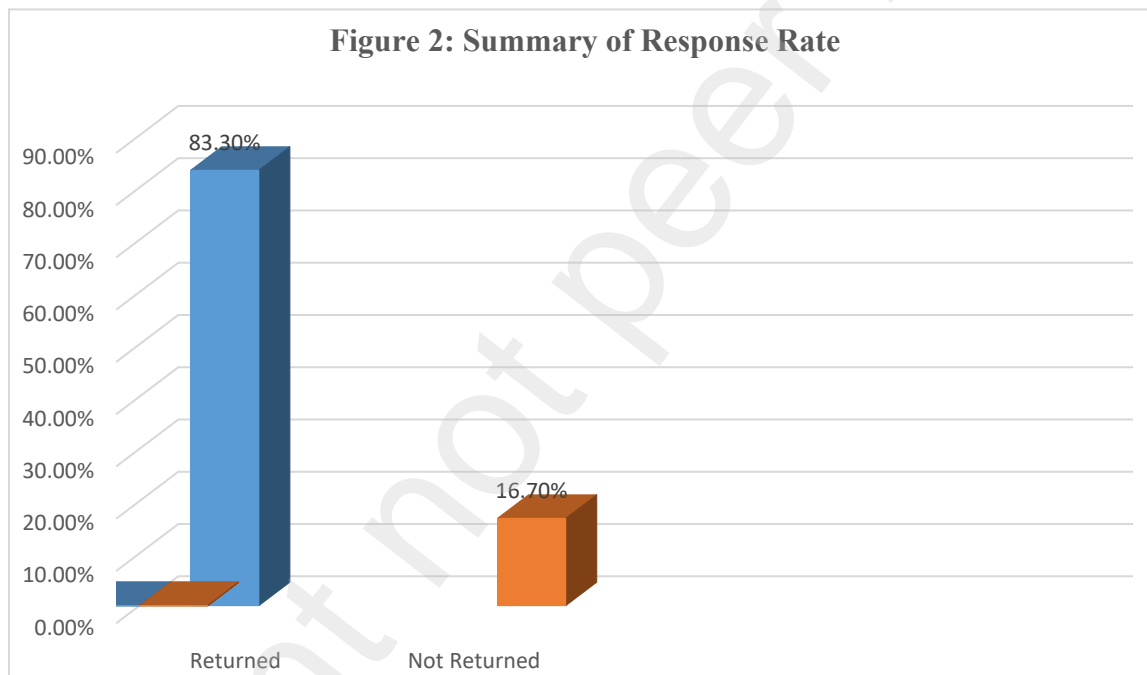


Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	41	54.7
Female	34	45.3
Total	75	100.0
Education Level		
Masters & post graduate	14	18.7
Professional certificate	9	12.0
Degree	42	56.0
Diploma	10	13.3
Total	75	100.0
Party		
NRM	24	32.0
NUP	21	28.0
DP	8	10.7
FDC	15	20.0
ANT	4	5.3
JEEMA	3	4.0
Total	75	100.0
Age		
18-24	23	30.6
25-32	15	20
33-40	11	14.7
41-48	13	17.3
49-56	9	12
57+	4	5.4
Total	75	100

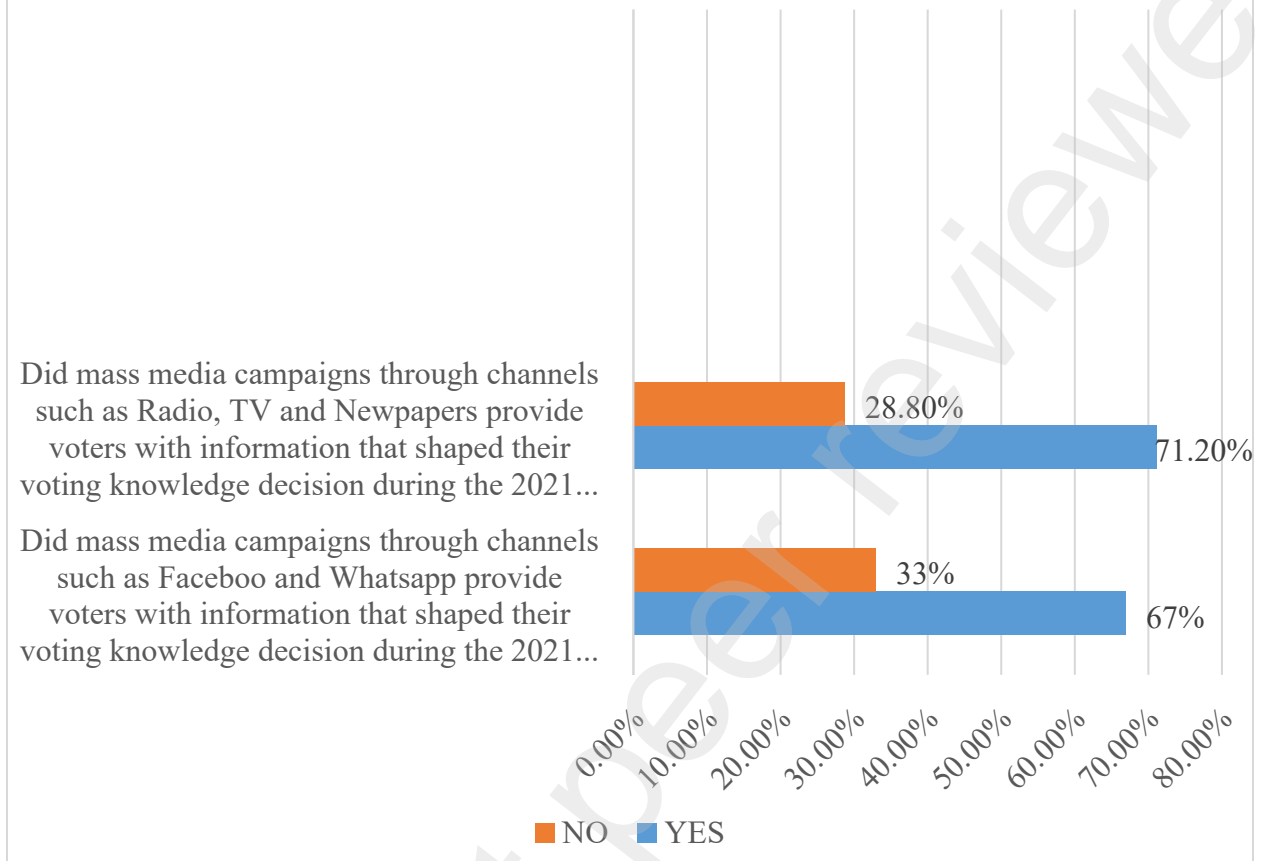
Source: Survey data, 2021

Table 2 above shows that the majority of the respondents (54.7 percent) were male and 45.3 percent were female. The majority of respondents (56%) had a bachelor's degree, followed by those with masters' degrees (18.7%), and only a minority had a professional certificate (12%). This means that the respondents are a select group of voters. According to party distribution, NRM members accounted for the highest number (32.0%), followed by NUP (28%), FDC (20%), DP (10.7%), ANT (5.3%, and JEEMA (4%). The age distribution of the respondents revealed that the majority (30.6%) were between 18 and 25 years, followed by those with ages between 25 and 32 years (20%), and those aged 57+ years (5.4%).

General Perception of Respondents about Media Political Campaign

Respondents assessed the importance of media-political campaigns on candidate performance and voter political efficacy. Figure 3 depicts a summary of the responses.

Figure 3: General Perception of Respondents on Media political Campaigns



According to a majority (71.2%) of the total respondents, mass media campaigns (radio, television, newspaper, and internet) were channels of a political campaign in which voters received candidate political messages that helped them assess and choose candidates in the 2021 elections. While 28.8% thought the media effort did not significantly promote political candidates' campaigns in order to improve their election results. Furthermore, the majority of respondents (67%) said that social media campaigns (Facebook and Whatsapp) were channels of a political campaign via which voters got candidate political messages that helped them evaluate and select their preferred candidate in the 2021 elections. While 33% of respondents believed that the social media effort did not significantly aid political candidates' campaigns in improving election results. According to the majority of participants' responses, using the media to promote a political campaign was one of the most successful strategies for politicians to reach out to potential voters. The fact that one million homes had televisions and 3.4 million had radios, compared to 17 million registered voters, shows how important media campaigning was for those who could access it (Nyagah, 2020). This study supports the hypothesis that voters' access to political campaign messaging in the media for candidates seeking votes in a competitive election influences how well they perform in the election (Giebler et.al. 2017).

Mass media campaign and political efficacy

By informing and educating the people about politics, the media plays a key role in electoral democracy. This study looked at how well-informed voters were when casting ballots in the general election on January 14, 2021, based on information gained from media political campaign access. The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between political efficacy and media campaign. Table 3 shows a summary of the responses.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics on mass media campaigns and political efficacy

Item	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Voters used information from media campaigns to elect candidates of their choice.	75	1.00	5.00	3.4933	1.17833
Voter awareness and abilities were improved significantly as a result of media initiatives.	75	1.00	5.00	3.9600	1.14420
In the general elections of 2021, a media-political campaign aided people in making voting decisions.	75	1.00	5.00	3.9867	1.08420
Political campaign messages in the media were not difficult to understand in order to vote for a candidate.	75	1.00	5.00	3.8000	1.03975
Regardless of your political affiliation, did you have adequate knowledge of media political campaigns to enable make a voting decision?	75	1.00	5.00	3.7333	1.09462
Did media political campaigns enable you to have a say in the voting decision?	75	1.00	5.00	3.8933	1.00772
Media political campaigns made people like me make a voting decision.	75	1.00	5.00	3.6933	1.03940
The media campaign helped to get information about the candidate I voted for.	75	1.00	5.00	3.8400	1.12754
Valid N (listwise)	75				

Source: Field survey data 2021

Table 3 shows that all items indicate a positive trend against all items. Mean ranges between 3.4933 and 3.9867 and standard deviation range between 1.00772 and 1.17833. This denotes that there is a connection of mean with other data. The results indicate that there was better access to mass media campaigns by voters (Mean = 3.9867 and SD = 1.08420). It further indicates on average that most voters were able to acquire information about contesting candidates (Mean = 3.9600 and SD = 1.14420). This implies that through continued campaign through mass media, voters felt that

they were to build a block of enhancing the performance of their candidates. Voters felt that mass media campaign information accessed was enough to help them to make a voting decision (Mean = 3.4933 and SD = 1.17833) hence they had good use and coordination through mass media in the election campaign to ensure voting decisions were easily made by the voters.

Regression analysis of mass media campaign and political efficacy

Correlation analysis was used to determine the magnitude and direction of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The results of the test are summarized in the table below:

Table 4: Regression of mass media campaign and political efficacy

Model	Unstandardized coefficients (B)	Std Error	Standardized Coefficients (β)	t	Sig
1 (constant)	12.700	3.204		3.964	.000
Mass media	.604	.103	.564	5.841	.000
	R = .564	R ² = .319	Adj. R ² = .309	F = 34.120	Sig .000

Dependent variable: Political efficacy; N= 75

Source: Field survey data, 2021

The findings from Table 4 above shows a 30.9% variation in political efficacy was caused by the variance in mass media campaign (Adj R² = .309; p < 0.01). The regression showed a positive significant relationship of (F=34.120; p<0.01). The table further shows a standardized beta coefficient of (β= .564; p < 0.01) that suggests that mass media significantly predict political efficacy. In this case, it supports H₁ that states mass media has a positive significant relationship with political efficacy. The conclusion that can be drawn from the presented hypothesis is that mass media campaigns were positively and significantly related to voters' political efficacy, meaning that the media campaigns gave voters knowledge information that guided their civic duty. This finding suggests that political candidates used mass media to encourage voters to vote for them during their campaigns. This supports the findings of Kleinnijenhuis et al. (2019) that voters' exposure to media-political campaigns aids them in electing candidates of their preference based on information gathered from the media about them.

Mass Media Political Campaign and Candidates' Performance in 2021 Elections

The electoral commission asked political candidates in Uganda's general election of 2021 to use media as one of their campaign methods to contain the spread of COVID-19. Table 1 shows a summary of the computed Mean and Standard Deviation. If candidates for political office used the media to promote themselves.

Table 5: Descriptive statistics on the mass media campaign

Item	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Political message campaigns through mass media increased the electoral performance of candidates.	75	1.00	5.00	3.9867	.96553
Mass media political campaign messages improved candidates' support in the election.	75	1.00	5.00	3.8000	1.13899
Mass media political campaign messages revealed the interest and skills of voters in the election.	75	1.00	5.00	3.8133	.99585
Mass media political campaign messages helped candidates to perform better in the election.	75	1.00	5.00	3.7733	1.13392
Mass media campaign messages revealed the feelings and emotions of voters.	75	1.00	5.00	4.0133	1.00664
Mass media political campaign messages enhanced candidates' performance in the election.	75	1.00	5.00	3.7467	1.12818
Candidates' performance in the election was influenced by mass media campaigns.	75	1.00	5.00	4.0533	.91376
Mass media was useful in helping candidates to enhance their performance in elections.	75	1.00	5.00	2.7067	1.31286
Valid N (listwise)	75				

Source: Field survey data, 2021

Table 5 above, depicts that the mean ranged from 2.7067 to 4.0533 and the standard deviation from 0.91376 and 1.31286. This shows consistency in the data to the rest of the items. The findings revealed that mass media was instrumental in helping candidates in their performance in elections (Mean= 4.0533 and SD = 0.91376. This implied that there was continuous use of mass media campaigns to reach out to voters (Mean = 3.9867 and SD = 0.96553). This is due to the fact that mass media campaigns influenced voters' voting decisions, and it proved that respondents accepted that political campaign messages delivered via mass media had a significant impact on candidate performance. This shows that politicians used the media to reach out to voters and ask for their support in order to reduce the number of persons infected with COVID-19.

Regression analysis of mass media campaigns and candidates' Performance

To determine the association between the variables, a basic regression analysis was used. Candidate election performance is positively and strongly associated with mass media, and

candidate election performance is positively and significantly associated with social media political campaigns. The results of the test are summarized in Table 6:

Table 6: Regression of mass media campaign and candidates' Performance

Model	Unstandardized coefficients (B)	Std Error	Standardized Coefficients (β)	t	Sig
1 (constant)	6.208	3.612		1.719	.090
Mass media campaign	.832	.119	.632	6.972	.000
	R= .632	R ² = .400	Adj. R ² = .391	F=48.603	Sig .000

Dependent variable: Candidates' performance; N= 75

Source: Field survey data, 2021

The findings from Table 6 above show a 39.1% variation in candidates' performance which is caused by a change in mass media campaigns (Adj R² = .391; p < 0.01). The regression has a positive significant relationship (F=48.603; p<0.01). The table further shows a standardized beta coefficient of (β= .632; p < 0.01) that suggests that mass media campaign significantly predicts candidates' performance. In this case, it supports the hypothesis that states "there is a positive significant relationship between mass media campaign and candidates performance in elections"

Social Media Political Campaign and Candidates' Performance in 2021 Elections

As a result of developments in communication technology, many people use social media and spend time there to get their messages to their intended audience. Respondents were asked if social media political campaigns influenced candidate performance in the general elections on January 14, 2021. Table 7 provides a summary of a calculated Mean and Std. Deviation of the responses.

Table 7: Descriptive statistics on a social media campaign and candidates' performance

Item	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Well packaged Social media campaign messages by political candidates provided better chances for political candidates to persuade voters and improve their performance in the 2021 general elections.	75	1.00	5.00	4.0400	1.03245
Campaigns through Social media helped Candidates in the 2021 general election to share their political goals with voters.	75	1.00	5.00	4.0933	.98877
Social media political campaigns improved the performance of candidates in the 2021 general elections.	75	1.00	5.00	3.8933	1.06000
Political campaigns through Social media in the 2021 general elections boosted voters' choice of preference.	75	1.00	5.00	3.9067	1.01573
Political campaigns through Social media sufficiently appealed to voters' mandate for political candidates to perform well in the 2021 general elections.	75	1.00	5.00	3.8800	.94383

The use of Social media effectively elicited voters' mandate in the 2021 general election.	75	1.00	5.00	3.9200	1.03663
Social media political campaigns were an effective channel to reach out to voters in the 2021 general election.	75	1.00	5.00	3.9467	.98493
Social media had a significant influence on candidates' performance in the election.	75	1.00	5.00	3.9200	1.15968
Valid N (listwise)	75				

Source: Field survey data, 2021

According to Table 7, there were positive trends on all criteria, indicating that social media political campaigns influenced candidates' election results. The mean of all items ranged from 3.8800 to 4.0933 and the standard deviation ranged between 0.94383 and 1.15968. This shows that a social media-based political campaign was effective in swaying voters' decisions to vote for a particular candidate (Mean = 4.0933 and SD = 0.98877). The findings also revealed that voters' voting decisions were influenced by social media campaigns. (Mean = 4.0400 and SD = 1.03245). This finding supports previous research by Aine, (2016), Kiranda et al. (2016), and Kamp et al. (2016), which found that social media had a significant impact on citizen voting behavior. However, it is important to note that this may not conclusive evidence that a political campaign through the media is an adequate conduit for bringing political candidates to the attention of all possible voters because it only favours those who have access to it. Indeed, Zhang and Chung (2020) argue that engaging voters through open rallies and door-to-door campaigns were more effective in eliciting voters' emotions and feelings to support political candidates in elections.

Regression Analysis of Social Media and Candidates' Performance in Elections

A regression analysis was carried out to establish if there was a positive and significant relationship between social media and the performance of candidates in elections. The results were as shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Regression Analysis of Social Media and performance of candidates in elections

Model	Unstandardized coefficients (B)	Std Error	Standardized Coefficients (β)	t	Sig
1 (constant)	3.571	2.892		1.235	.221
Social media	.870	.090	.749	9.648	.000
	R= .749	R ² = .560	Adj. R ² = .554	F-93.083	Sig .000

Dependent variable: Candidates' Performance; N= 75

Source: Field survey data, 2021

Table 8 shows that there was a variation in the data of 55.4% which can explain the performance of candidates in elections being caused by the political campaign through social media (Adj. R² = 0.554; $p < 0.01$). This, therefore, suggests that there was a positive and significant relationship between social media and the performance of candidates in elections (F=93.083; $p < 0.01$). It was found that political campaigns through social media significantly predicted the performance of

candidates in elections with a standardized beta coefficient of ($\beta= 0.749$; $p < 0.01$) implying that political campaigns through social media significantly influenced the voters' understanding of electoral politics. Against this, it may be argued that the hypothesis positing a link between social media-based political campaigns and election performance was accepted. This finding is consistent with Ahmad et al (2019)'s findings, which found that social media was critical in producing political knowledge and awareness, which influenced voters' political engagement decisions. It also supports the conclusions of research conducted by Sahly et al. (2019); Fraia and Missaglia (2014), which found that Trump and Clinton used social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter in their political campaigns to urge supporters to vote for them during the election. Furthermore, the study's findings are consistent with those of Tayeebwa (2016), who found that citizens' use of social media was critical in reaching out to their political leaders and vice-versa to discuss issues of national importance, providing information to enrich their knowledge for decision-making, and creating networking among citizens for a common cause. However, it contradicts the conclusions of the Intyaswati et al. (2020) and Bright et al. (2019) studies, which found no link between social media and election performance or citizen political efficacy, particularly among youth.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The importance of media exposure cannot be overstated. Political campaigns using television, radio, newspapers, and social media platforms such as Facebook and Whatsapp have all been shown to have a considerable influence on political candidates' performance in the 2021 general elections. People benefited from the media in terms of learning about politicians running for office and, as a result, demonstrating their political efficacy by voting for their preferred candidates during elections. This indicates that the media had an important role in the election, as research has shown that politicians used the media to improve their strategies for influencing people's voting decisions. Perhaps, more importantly, the media's role in democratic election processes continues to be critical, particularly as a marketing platform for political politicians seeking voter support. As a result, media campaigns' involvement in democratic election processes has practically become a significant political marketing tool for persuading voters.

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Uganda's Presidential and Parliamentary Elections in 2021: Media Campaigns and Political Candidate Performance

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