

Acceptance and Engagement with Short-Form Political Videos among Young Social Media Users in Tamil Nadu: An Extended Technology Acceptance Model

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Abstract— The rapid expansion of short-form video platforms has fundamentally altered the ways in which young people encounter, interpret and respond to political information. This study applies an extended version of the Technology Acceptance Model to investigate the factors that shape acceptance of and engagement with short-form political videos among young social-media users in Tamil Nadu. Drawing on a quantitative cross-sectional survey of 300 respondents aged 18–30 years in Coimbatore district, the research examines the influence of perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, trust in political video content and digital literacy on users' willingness to accept such videos, and subsequently on their engagement behaviours. Descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, Pearson correlation and multiple regression were employed. Results indicate that perceived usefulness is the strongest predictor of acceptance, followed closely by trust and digital literacy, while perceived ease of use exerts a smaller yet statistically significant effect. Acceptance, in turn, shows a clear positive association with engagement activities such as liking, sharing, saving and discussing political videos. The findings extend the Technology Acceptance Model to the distinctive affordances of short-form political video and underscore the continuing centrality of usefulness and trust in an environment characterised by high volume, algorithmic curation and variable source credibility. Implications for political communicators, digital-literacy educators and platform designers are discussed.

Keywords: Digital literacy, Instagram Reels, political communication, short-form video, Tamil Nadu, Technology Acceptance Model, trust, YouTube Shorts, youth engagement

I. INTRODUCTION

I.I. GROWTH OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Over the past decade, social media platforms have moved from the periphery to the centre of everyday information practices, especially among younger cohorts. What was once an occasional source of news has become, for many users aged 18–30, the

primary and often the only regular channel through which political events, policy debates and electoral developments are encountered. This shift reflects both technological change the near-universal ownership of smartphones and the continuous availability of high-speed mobile internet and deeper transformations in media consumption habits. Young people increasingly favour on-demand, visually rich and socially embedded content over the scheduled broadcasts and lengthy articles that characterised earlier media eras.

I.II. POLITICAL COMMUNICATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Political actors have adapted rapidly to these new conditions. Parties, candidates, government agencies and independent influencers now produce large volumes of content specifically designed for social-media circulation. In India, and particularly in linguistically and culturally distinctive states such as Tamil Nadu, social-media platforms have become central arenas for campaign messaging, issue framing and voter mobilisation. The speed with which short clips can be produced, edited and distributed has compressed the traditional news cycle and allowed political narratives to travel through peer networks with unprecedented velocity.

I.III. SHORT-FORM POLITICAL VIDEOS

Among the various formats available, short-form videos most notably Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts have acquired particular prominence. These clips, typically lasting between fifteen and sixty seconds, combine visual immediacy, emotional resonance and algorithmic amplification. They can package complex political issues into digestible, shareable units that require minimal cognitive or temporal investment from the viewer. Research examining audience engagement with political messaging on YouTube Shorts has shown that such content often attracts higher view counts and like rates than longer-form videos, although it may also display elevated levels of affective intensity and polarisation. Parallel studies of Instagram Reels and related formats confirm their capacity to reach young audiences who may otherwise disengage from conventional political messaging.

I.IV. YOUTH AND POLITICAL INFORMATION CONSUMPTION

Young social-media users do not simply absorb whatever appears in their feeds. Their decisions to pause, watch, accept or further circulate a political video are shaped by a constellation of perceptions: whether the content is judged useful for understanding current events, whether it is easy to access and comprehend, whether the source or the platform is regarded as trustworthy, and whether the user possesses the evaluative skills needed to distinguish credible information from misinformation or propaganda. Exposure, in other words, is not synonymous with acceptance, and acceptance does not automatically translate into active engagement.

I.V. RESEARCH PROBLEM

Despite the growing ubiquity of short-form political videos, systematic empirical attention to the factors that drive their acceptance and subsequent engagement among young users in the Tamil Nadu context remains limited. Existing studies have examined broader patterns of political-news consumption on social media or the role of digital platforms in electoral decision-making. They have not, however, isolated the distinctive characteristics of the short-form video format or tested an extended Technology Acceptance Model specifically against this form of political communication.

I.VI. NEED FOR THE STUDY

An extended Technology Acceptance Model that incorporates trust and digital literacy offers a coherent theoretical lens through which to address this gap. By focusing on short-form political videos, the present study seeks to generate more precise knowledge about an increasingly influential mode of political communication and to contribute both to academic theory and to practical efforts aimed at fostering more informed and critical engagement among young citizens.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

II.I. SOCIAL MEDIA AND POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

A substantial body of international and comparative research documents the migration of political information toward digital platforms. Younger age groups are especially likely to identify social media as their main source of news about politics and public affairs, a pattern observed across Europe, North America and parts of Asia. This shift carries dual implications: it expands

opportunities for political expression and low-threshold participation, yet it also raises concerns about selective exposure, the circulation of unverified claims and the emotional intensification of political discourse.

II.II. SHORT-FORM VIDEO CONSUMPTION

Short-form video has emerged as one of the most dynamic formats within contemporary digital culture. Analyses of large corpora of political content on YouTube Shorts indicate that these brief clips tend to generate higher levels of passive engagement (views and likes) while eliciting fewer comments than longer videos; they also appear more polarised and, in some cases, more toxic. Parallel research on Instagram Reels and TikTok has highlighted the capacity of short videos to reach young audiences who may otherwise disengage from conventional political messaging. In the Indian context, short-form content has been shown to play a decisive role in amplifying campaign narratives during national and state-level elections.

II.III. YOUTH POLITICAL INFORMATION BEHAVIOUR

Young users exhibit distinctive information practices. They spend substantial amounts of time on platforms optimised for vertical video, display a preference for content that is visually striking and emotionally resonant, and often rely on algorithmic recommendations rather than deliberate search. At the same time, levels of critical evaluation vary widely. Studies of adolescents and young adults consistently note that while many encounter political content daily, fewer engage in systematic verification or cross-checking of sources.

II.IV. TECHNOLOGY ACCEPTANCE MODEL

The Technology Acceptance Model, originally formulated by Davis, posits that two key beliefs perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use shape users' attitudes toward a technology and, ultimately, their behavioural intention to use it. Perceived usefulness refers to the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system will enhance their performance or help them achieve valued goals; perceived ease of use refers to the degree to which the person believes that using the system will be free of effort. Subsequent extensions of the model have incorporated additional constructs such as trust, social influence and facilitating conditions, recognising that acceptance decisions rarely rest on utilitarian considerations alone.

II.V. PERCEIVED USEFULNESS AND POLITICAL-VIDEO CONSUMPTION

When young users judge short-form political videos as helpful for understanding current issues, clarifying candidates' positions or staying informed about public debates, they are more likely to accept and continue consuming such content. Usefulness has repeatedly emerged as a robust predictor in applications of the Technology Acceptance Model to news and political information environments.

II.VI. PERCEIVED EASE OF USE

The design of contemporary short-form platforms minimises friction: videos autoplay, require little deliberate navigation and can be consumed in fragmented moments throughout the day. This low barrier to access can itself enhance perceptions of usefulness, creating a mutually reinforcing relationship between the two core TAM constructs.

II.VII. TRUST AND POLITICAL INFORMATION

Trust functions as a critical evaluative filter in political communication. In an environment saturated with both professional campaign material and unverified influencer content, users' willingness to accept a video as a legitimate source of information depends heavily on their assessment of the source's credibility and the platform's overall trustworthiness. Research on digital political engagement consistently identifies trust as a significant predictor of both acceptance and further circulation of content.

II.VIII. DIGITAL LITERACY

Digital literacy encompasses the cognitive and technical skills required to locate, evaluate, verify and ethically use online information. Higher levels of digital literacy enable users to apply more discriminating criteria when deciding which political videos merit attention and acceptance. Several studies have demonstrated that digital literacy can moderate the relationships between ease of use, usefulness and behavioural outcomes in technology-acceptance frameworks and can also influence trust formation.

II.IX. RESEARCH GAP

Although the Technology Acceptance Model has been applied to general political-news consumption on social media, and although short-form video has been recognised as an increasingly important format, few studies have combined these two foci. In particular, there remains a shortage of research that examines why young users in a specific regional context such as Tamil Nadu accept short-form political videos and how that acceptance relates to concrete engagement behaviours. The present study addresses this gap by applying an extended TAM that incorporates trust and digital literacy to the distinctive affordances of Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts.

III. THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

III.I. TECHNOLOGY ACCEPTANCE MODEL

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), originally developed by Davis (1989), is one of the most influential and widely applied theoretical frameworks in information systems and communication research. At its core, the model proposes that external variables influence two fundamental beliefs: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. These two perceptions shape an individual's attitude toward using a particular technology. Attitude, in turn, influences behavioural intention to use the technology, which ultimately determines actual system use. A key feature of the original model is the additional path from perceived ease of use to perceived usefulness, recognising that systems that are easier to use are often perceived as more useful.

The model's enduring appeal lies in its parsimony, clarity, and strong empirical support across diverse technological contexts. Over the years, it has been successfully applied to a wide range of digital technologies, including social media platforms, online news systems, and mobile applications.

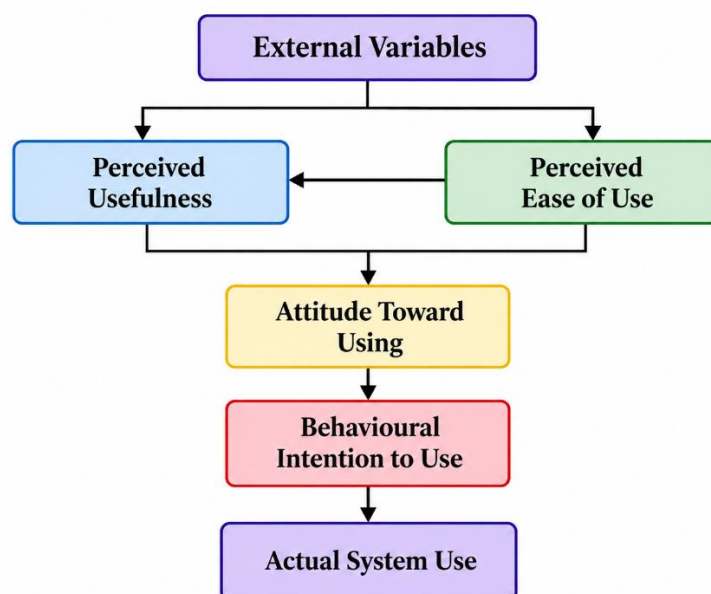


Figure 1: Original Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989)

III.II. EXTENDED TECHNOLOGY ACCEPTANCE MODEL

While the original Technology Acceptance Model provides a robust foundation, it requires meaningful extension when applied to the domain of political short-form videos. Unlike neutral or purely utilitarian technologies, political content is value-laden and operates in an environment characterised by competing claims, varying source credibility, and the constant risk of misinformation. Consequently, purely utilitarian perceptions of usefulness and ease of use are unlikely to fully explain why young users accept or reject such content.

The present study therefore extends the original model in two important ways. First, **trust** in political video content is introduced as a direct predictor of acceptance. In a high-choice, algorithmically curated media environment, users' willingness to accept a short-form political video depends significantly on the degree to which they perceive the content or its source as trustworthy. Second, **digital literacy** is incorporated as an additional independent variable. Users differ systematically in their ability to

evaluate, verify, and critically assess online political information. Higher levels of digital literacy are expected to influence both the evaluation process and the eventual decision to accept short-form political videos.

In this extended framework, **acceptance** is conceptualised as a key intervening variable. Acceptance reflects the user's overall willingness to regard short-form political videos as legitimate and useful sources of political information. This acceptance is then expected to influence subsequent **engagement** behaviours, including liking, commenting, sharing, saving, or discussing the videos with others.

III.III. CONCEPTUAL MODEL

The proposed conceptual framework integrates the core constructs of the Technology Acceptance Model with the two additional variables of trust and digital literacy. As illustrated in Figure 2, four independent variables: Perceived Usefulness, Perceived Ease of Use, Trust, and Digital Literacy are hypothesised to influence Acceptance of short-form political videos. Acceptance, in turn, is expected to predict Engagement.

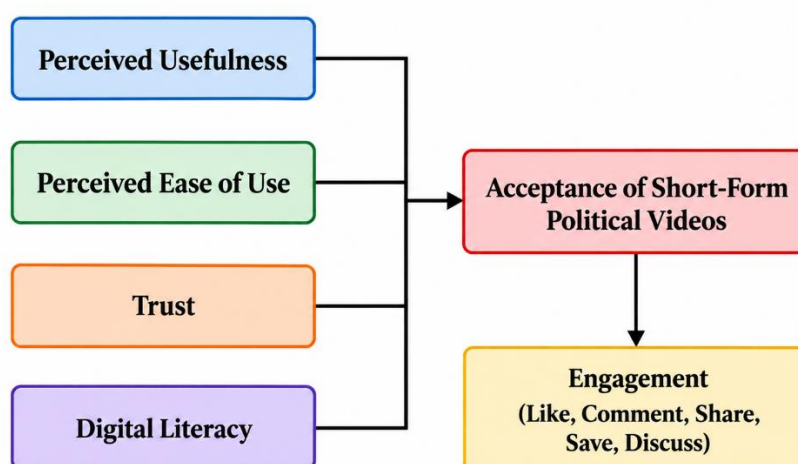


Figure 2: Proposed Conceptual Framework – Extended Technology Acceptance Model for Short-Form Political Videos

This framework retains the theoretical elegance of the original TAM while adapting it to the specific characteristics of political short-form video consumption among young social media users.

III.IV. HYPOTHESES

On the basis of the extended model, the following hypotheses are advanced:

- H1: Perceived usefulness has a significant positive relationship with acceptance of short-form political videos.
- H2: Perceived ease of use has a significant positive relationship with acceptance of short-form political videos.
- H3: Trust in political video content has a significant positive relationship with acceptance of short-form political videos.
- H4: Digital literacy has a significant positive relationship with acceptance of short-form political videos.
- H5: Acceptance of short-form political videos has a significant positive relationship with user engagement.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

IV.I. RESEARCH DESIGN

A quantitative cross-sectional survey design was selected as the most appropriate approach for testing the proposed relationships among latent constructs at a single point in time. This design permits efficient collection of standardised data from a relatively large sample and supports the use of correlational and regression techniques.

IV.II. STUDY POPULATION

The target population consists of young social-media users aged 18–30 years residing in Coimbatore district, Tamil Nadu, who regularly use platforms that host short-form video content and who have encountered political videos in this format.

IV.III. SAMPLE SIZE

A final analytic sample of 300 valid responses was obtained. This size provides adequate statistical power for multiple regression analysis involving four predictors while remaining practically manageable for a single-district study.

IV.IV. SAMPLING METHOD

Purposive sampling was employed because respondents needed to meet specific inclusion criteria most importantly, prior exposure to short-form political videos. Recruitment was conducted through colleges, universities, youth organisations and online networks, with deliberate efforts to include variation in age, gender, educational background and urban–rural residence within the district.

IV.V. DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT

A structured questionnaire comprising six sections was developed. Section A captured demographic information. Section B measured patterns of social-media use and frequency of exposure to short-form political videos. Sections C through F contained multi-item Likert-scale measures of perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, trust, digital literacy, acceptance and engagement. All attitudinal items employed a five-point response format ranging from “Strongly Disagree” (1) to “Strongly Agree” (5). Items were adapted from established Technology Acceptance Model scales and refined through pilot testing to ensure contextual relevance to short-form political video.

IV.VI. RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach’s alpha. All multi-item constructs yielded alpha coefficients above 0.80, indicating satisfactory reliability. Content validity was supported by expert review of item wording and coverage.

IV.VII. DATA ANALYSIS

Data were analysed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations), Pearson product-moment correlations and ordinary least-squares multiple regression. Statistical significance was evaluated at the conventional 0.05 level.

V. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

V.I. DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 300)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	18–21	112	37.3
	22–25	128	42.7
	26–30	60	20.0
Gender	Male	156	52.0
	Female	144	48.0
Education	Undergraduate	178	59.3
	Postgraduate	89	29.7

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
	Other	33	11.0
Occupation	Student	195	65.0
	Employed	78	26.0
	Other	27	9.0
Residence	Urban	214	71.3
	Semi-urban/Rural	86	28.7

The sample is reasonably balanced by gender and is weighted toward students and urban residents, reflecting both the demographic composition of the target age group and the practicalities of recruitment in an educational hub such as Coimbatore.

V.II. PATTERNS OF SOCIAL-MEDIA AND SHORT-FORM VIDEO USE

Instagram emerged as the dominant platform for short-form video consumption (reported as primary by 68 per cent of respondents), followed by YouTube (54 per cent) and WhatsApp status or forwarded clips (41 per cent). Mean daily time spent on social media was 3.8 hours (SD = 1.4). Frequency of encountering political short-form videos was substantial: 62 per cent of respondents reported seeing such content several times a week or more often. These descriptive patterns confirm that short-form political video constitutes a regular feature of the information environment of the sample.

V.III. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF KEY CONSTRUCTS

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and Reliability of Key Constructs

Construct	Mean	SD	Cronbach's α
Perceived Usefulness	3.72	0.81	0.87
Perceived Ease of Use	4.15	0.68	0.84
Trust	3.41	0.89	0.86
Digital Literacy	3.68	0.76	0.83
Acceptance	3.59	0.82	0.88
Engagement	3.28	0.91	0.85

Perceived ease of use recorded the highest mean score, consistent with the low-effort design of contemporary short-form platforms. Trust registered the lowest mean, indicating a residual degree of caution among respondents when evaluating political video content. All constructs demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency.

V.IV. CORRELATION ANALYSIS

Table 3: Pearson Correlation Matrix

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Perceived Usefulness	1					
2. Perceived Ease of Use	0.48**	1				

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Trust	0.52**	0.31**	1			
4. Digital Literacy	0.39**	0.44**	0.36**	1		
5. Acceptance	0.61**	0.42**	0.55**	0.47**	1	
6. Engagement	0.49**	0.33**	0.46**	0.41**	0.58**	1

$p < 0.01$

All four independent variables were positively and significantly correlated with acceptance. Acceptance itself displayed a robust positive correlation with engagement, providing initial support for the final hypothesis.

V.V. MULTIPLE REGRESSIONS PREDICTING ACCEPTANCE

Table 4: Multiple Regression Results – Predictors of Acceptance

Predictor	β	t	p
Perceived Usefulness	0.38	7.12	<0.001
Perceived Ease of Use	0.15	2.89	0.004
Trust	0.29	5.41	<0.001
Digital Literacy	0.21	4.03	<0.001
R ²	0.52		
Adjusted R ²	0.51		
F (4, 295)	79.6		<0.001

The regression model accounted for 52 per cent of the variance in acceptance. Perceived usefulness emerged as the strongest unique predictor, followed by trust and digital literacy. Perceived ease of use retained a statistically significant but smaller coefficient. These results provide clear support for Hypotheses 1 through 4.

V.VI. ACCEPTANCE AND ENGAGEMENT

A simple linear regression of engagement on acceptance yielded a standardised coefficient of $\beta = 0.58$ ($t = 12.4$, $p < 0.001$) and an R² of 0.34. Thus, higher levels of acceptance are associated with greater engagement, supporting Hypothesis 5.

V.VII. SUMMARY OF HYPOTHESIS TESTING

All five hypotheses received empirical support at conventional levels of statistical significance.

VI. DISCUSSION

The pattern of findings is consistent with the core logic of the Technology Acceptance Model while also illustrating the value of the proposed extensions. Perceived usefulness exerted the strongest influence on acceptance, confirming that young users are more willing to accept short-form political videos when they judge those videos to be helpful for understanding political issues or staying informed. This result aligns with a long line of TAM research showing that usefulness beliefs are typically more consequential than ease-of-use beliefs once a technology has become familiar.

Perceived ease of use, although significant, displayed a weaker unique effect. Given the high mean score on this construct, it appears that most respondents already experience short-form platforms as effortless; residual variation in ease of use therefore contributes less to differences in acceptance.

Trust emerged as a robust predictor, underscoring the evaluative character of political communication. In an information environment that mixes professional campaign material, partisan commentary and unverified claims, users' willingness to accept a video as a legitimate source of political information depends substantially on their assessment of credibility. Digital literacy likewise made an independent contribution, suggesting that users who possess stronger evaluative skills are more selective and ultimately more accepting of the content they choose to regard as useful.

Finally, the clear positive relationship between acceptance and engagement indicates that cognitive acceptance is not merely an attitudinal endpoint; it translates into observable behaviours that further circulate political messages through social networks. Liking, sharing and discussing videos amplify reach and can shape the information environments of peers.

Taken together, the results suggest that interventions aimed at improving the quality of political short-form video whether by increasing substantive usefulness, enhancing source transparency or strengthening users' digital-literacy skills are likely to influence both acceptance and subsequent engagement.

VII. CONCLUSION

This study has applied an extended Technology Acceptance Model to the acceptance and engagement of short-form political videos among young social-media users in Tamil Nadu. Perceived usefulness, trust and digital literacy emerged as the primary drivers of acceptance; perceived ease of use played a supporting role. Acceptance, in turn, was positively associated with engagement behaviours. By focusing specifically on the short-form video format, the research refines existing knowledge about youth political information practices and demonstrates the continued utility of the Technology Acceptance Model when appropriately extended to contemporary digital contexts.

VIII. IMPLICATIONS

From an academic standpoint, the study confirms that the Technology Acceptance Model, when augmented with trust and digital literacy, provides a coherent and empirically supported framework for understanding acceptance of political short-form video. For political communicators and media practitioners, the findings highlight the importance of producing content that is substantively useful and that originates from, or is clearly associated with, credible sources. For educators and digital-literacy advocates, the independent contribution of digital literacy underscores the value of programmes that equip young users with verification and critical-evaluation skills. Platform designers may also draw lessons concerning the relative weight of usefulness versus ease of use once a technology has achieved widespread familiarity.

IX. LIMITATIONS

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The cross-sectional design precludes strong causal inference. Reliance on self-reported measures introduces the possibility of social-desirability and recall biases. The sample is restricted to Coimbatore district and was obtained through purposive sampling, limiting generalisability to other regions of Tamil Nadu or to the broader population of young social-media users. Finally, the study focuses on users who already encounter short-form political videos; the processes that lead non-users to begin consuming such content remain outside its scope.

X. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future work could usefully adopt longitudinal designs to track changes in acceptance and engagement over time, expand geographic coverage within Tamil Nadu and beyond, and incorporate experimental manipulations of video features such as source cues, emotional tone or factual density. Qualitative approaches would also enrich understanding of how young users subjectively define "usefulness" and "trust" in the context of short-form political content. Finally, the inclusion of additional constructs such as algorithmic awareness, political interest or susceptibility to misinformation could further refine the extended Technology Acceptance Model for political short-form video.

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