Extending the Technology Acceptance Model for Political Artificial Intelligence Adoption with Trust and Transparency

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Abstract

This conceptual review examines the scholarly literature on AI adoption in political engagement, arguing that technical utility alone is insufficient. While the core Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) factors (Perceived Usefulness and Ease of Use) drive initial intentions, the analysis highlights that acceptance critically hinges on non-technical elements: social trust, political affiliation, and ethical concerns. The study addresses the critical intention-action gap between intending to use AI and its actual implementation in politics. To guide future scholarship, the paper advances existing TAM-based research by proposing an extension of TAM that formally integrates trust, transparency, and ethical perception as fundamental factors. The findings suggest that future research prioritize testing this conceptual extension and shifting focus toward tracking measurable, real-world AI use in elections. Successful, responsible AI integration is found to rely significantly on building public trust through stringent ethical safeguards.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Political Communication, Technology Acceptance Model, Transparency, Trust

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Introduction

The rapid integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into democratic processes relates to modern political engagement, fundamentally altering how governments communicate, campaigns operate, and citizens interact with information. This pervasive development is driven not only by AI technologies that offer unprecedented capabilities for efficiency and targeting but also by a multi-layered turn to AI rooted in discursive and political pressures for the automated governance of digital platforms (Katzenbach, 2021). To define the scope of this review, this article specifically examines AI adoption among two primary groups: political practitioners, such as campaigners and government agencies who utilize AI for operational efficiency, and the voting public, who must navigate AI-driven political communication. However, this transformation is fraught with risk, as the unchecked deployment of AI simultaneously poses severe threats to the integrity of global elections and the democratic process itself through the proliferation of disinformation and deepfakes, real-world examples of which include the use of AI-generated content to manipulate voter sentiment or the deployment of micro-targeting algorithms in high-stakes electoral contests (Islam et al., 2024). This critical gap demands a robust theoretical framework to understand the complex human factors governing AI acceptance in this sensitive democratic sphere.

To understand AI adoption in this high-stakes context, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which centers on Perceived Usefulness and Perceived Ease of Use (Davis, 1989), serves as a crucial starting point. Existing literature confirms that these two dimensions are key drivers for positive attitudes and intentions to adopt AI in political communication, driven by the technology's capacity to enhance campaign efficiency and deliver relevant messaging (Pislaru et al., 2024; Aldraiweesh & Alturki, 2025). Nevertheless, in the unique, highly sensitive environment of political engagement, technical efficiency alone is insufficient. The literature strongly indicates that a standard TAM application fails to account for vital non-technical elements; specifically, the inherent risks of bias, misinformation (Kouroupis, 2023), and the influence of citizens' existing social trust and political affiliation must be factored in as elements that critically shape attitude and ultimate acceptance (Yang et al., 2025; Jungherr et al., 2024). This complexity highlights the most significant conceptual hurdle: the persistent, critical gap between an individual's behavioral intention to use AI tools and their actual use in real-world political and public settings (Ikon et al., 2025).

Addressing this disconnect, this article reviews and expands the TAM framework for AI use in politics. The study's objective is threefold; first, it systematically reviews research on the core TAM factors, perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, within the political domain. Second, it critically analyzes the crucial supporting roles of factors unique to politics, such as trust, transparency, and ethical perception, as essential elements

for acceptance. Finally, it proposes an extended TAM for political engagement that advances existing scholarship by formally articulating how these non-technical factors bridge the intention-action gap, providing a theoretical contribution that goes beyond traditional utilitarian models.

Scope and Literature Selection Strategy

To ensure transparency and minimize selection bias, this review followed a structured selection process. Literature was identified through searches in major academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science (SJR), and Thai Journal Citation Index (TCI) utilizing keywords like "Artificial Intelligence," "Technology Acceptance Model," "Political Communication," "Trust," and "Transparency". The review prioritizes recent peer-reviewed articles published between 2019 and 2025 to capture the latest developments in generative AI and deepfakes, while also incorporating foundational theoretical texts (e.g., Davis, 1989; Ajzen, 1991) to establish the model's core. Inclusion criteria required studies to either empirically test TAM in a political context or theoretically explore the intersection of AI and democratic engagement.

Applying the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) to AI in Political Engagement

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) centers on two primary elements: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use (Davis, 1989). Both of which significantly shape the likelihood of technology adoption (Aubert et al., 2012). TAM's theoretical foundation is found in the Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1977) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991; 2011). For an organization to adopt new technologies successfully, alignment with existing values, responsiveness to current market demands, and appropriateness for users' experience levels are necessary considerations (Rogers, 2010).

In this high-stakes context, AI adoption must be distinguished between two primary stakeholder groups: political practitioners (campaigners and government agencies) who utilize AI for operational efficiency, and the voting public, who must navigate AI-driven political communication and digital electoral tools. By combining the advantages of AI for campaign enhancement, essentially perceived usefulness, with strategies that improve accessibility and ease of use, institutions can optimize the rate of adoption among governments and citizens alike. According to TAM, these two dimensions remain central to users' willingness to adopt AI in political communication (Davis, 1989), highlighting AI's capacity to improve engagement, efficiency, and inclusivity in contemporary campaigning.

However, in the unique, highly sensitive environment of political engagement, technical efficiency alone is insufficient. The literature indicates that a standard TAM application often fails to account for vital non-technical elements; specifically, the inherent risks of bias and misinformation (Kouroupis, 2023), and the influence of citizens' existing social trust and political affiliation must be factored in as elements that critically shape ultimate acceptance. Furthermore, the analysis must expand to include risks of state-led surveillance, repression, and coercion, which are central to trust formation and legitimacy in many real-world

political settings. Beyond technical utility, the "intention-action gap" remains a significant hurdle, where actual use is often hindered by specific technical and resource constraints such as high implementation costs and a lack of data literacy among political personnel. The following sections discuss perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use in detail and explore their implications for strengthening user acceptance and campaign effectiveness.

Perceived Usefulness of AI in Political Communication Context

Perceived usefulness is about how much someone believes a technology can actually help them do their job or reach their goals (Davis, 1989). In the high-stakes environment of political engagement, the interpretation of this utility differs significantly between two primary stakeholder groups: political practitioners (campaigners and government agencies) and the voting public. For practitioners, AI's utility is often defined by its capacity to enhance campaign efficiency and deliver relevant messaging (Aldraiweesh & Alturki, 2025). AI makes this easier. It can look at huge amounts of data to help governments and organizations understand what people think and what interests them online (Jackson, 2019; Battista & Uva, 2023). Social listening tools let teams follow public mood, pick out the most useful information, and turn it into strategies that actually connect with people (Tam & Kim, 2019; Westermann & Forthmann, 2021; Stewart & Arnold, 2018; Boender et al., 2023). Google Trends and similar tools give quick insights into what grabs public attention. They even allow comparisons across countries, showing how AI can be applied in different settings (Erokhin, 2025; Kiss, 2024).

However, for voters and the general public, technical utility is frequently weighed against democratic risks. While AI can personalize political information, its "usefulness" is diminished if it is perceived as a tool for spreading disinformation or deepfakes that threaten electoral integrity (Islam et al., 2024). Furthermore, the analysis of perceived usefulness must expand to include concerns over state-led surveillance, repression, and coercion. In many sensitive political contexts, the adoption of AI for "efficiency" is viewed with skepticism if it is suspected of being used for automated governance or the suppression of dissent, which directly impacts trust and legitimacy (Yang et al., 2025).

Beyond just tracking trends, AI can speed up decision-making, automate routine tasks, and reduce mistakes (Reis et al., 2021). It also helps deliver messages more clearly, cutting through unnecessary noise and over-promotion, which makes campaigns more effective (Jackson, 2019; Battista & Uva, 2023). AI can influence how voters see the fairness of elections, although the effect can differ depending on political leanings (Lee-Geiller, 2024). In public services, whether AI gets adopted often depends on how safely and efficiently it can handle tasks while humans still play key roles, with regulations and private tools supporting the process (Reis et al., 2021).

All of this shows that AI is not just a technical tool; it actually has practical value. Perceived usefulness is a key reason why people decide to adopt it in political campaigns and public service communication (Kamal & Kaur, 2025; Groves et al., 2023). By helping

target messages, analyze voter behavior, and make better decisions, AI makes it more likely that users will see it as genuinely useful for achieving their goals (Sripech & Bhukrongna, 2023; Ikon et al., 2025).

Perceived Ease of Use of AI in Political Communication Context

Perceived ease of use is all about how simple people think a technology is and how little effort it takes to use it (Davis, 1989). For political practitioners, easy dashboards, and guides or training that actually help. When they can use AI tools without hassle, they are more likely to adopt them and feel good about using them (Aldraiweesh & Alturki, 2025; Pislaru et al, 2024). For voters and citizens, perceived ease of use is critical for the legitimacy of digital democratic processes. AI features like natural language processing and smart assistance make e-voting systems easier to handle. These features, together with perceived usefulness, shape whether people want to try the technology (Annonov & Myeong, 2024). Making AI user-friendly also depends on understanding the people using it, considering age, offering accessible tools, running training sessions, and spreading awareness so everyone can use the system smoothly (Pislaru et al., 2024).

Nevertheless, AI can carry biases from its data or design; it can spread wrong or misleading information and reduce trust in elections (Kouroupis, 2023). Sometimes, biased or misleading content created or boosted by AI might even influence election results and threaten democracy (Pislaru et al., 2024). This raises important issues like privacy, bias, and concentrated power. That is why there are rules and ethical guidelines to use AI responsibly. Using AI in campaigns or government decisions needs careful handling. The goal is to get the benefits without harming people's rights, including privacy and freedom of speech (Battista & Uva, 2023).

Attitudes and Acceptance of AI in Electoral Contexts

Attitudes toward technology use play a central role in determining individuals' intention to adopt new systems, with more positive attitudes generally leading to higher adoption rates (Davis, 1989). For political practitioners and professionals, attitudes are largely driven by perceived impacts on work efficiency and productivity. While many view AI positively as a tool to streamline operations, skepticism remains contingent on their specific field and professional background (Emon & Khan, 2025; Yadrovskaia et al., 2023). In the context of elections, public attitudes toward AI are shaped by trust in key actors as well as perceptions of risks and benefits, with differences across political affiliations affecting support for AI (Yang et al., 2025). Additionally, people's broader views on AI's societal benefits and risks influence how positively they perceive its use in elections, indicating that general attitudes toward AI play a role in its acceptance in specific contexts (Jungherr et al., 2024). Similarly, voter attitudes toward AI-powered political advertising are shaped by perceptions of its usefulness and ethical implementation, emphasizing the importance of transparency and accountability (Kamal & Kaur, 2025).

Taken together, these findings suggest that attitudes toward AI, whether among professionals, the general public, or voters, serve as a critical determinant of both adoption and acceptance across different contexts. Positive perceptions of AI's usefulness and ethical implementation can reinforce trust, increase engagement, and facilitate more effective application in both workplaces and political campaigns. Conversely, concerns over risks, bias, or ethical misuse can hinder adoption and shape skepticism, highlighting the interplay between perceived benefits, ethical considerations, and trust in governing actors. This synthesis underscores the need for strategies that not only demonstrate AI's practical advantages but also address ethical transparency, accountability, and public trust, ensuring that AI is embraced responsibly in professional and electoral settings.

Behavioral Intentions and Actual Use of AI in Political and Public Contexts

Positive attitudes toward AI, together with self-efficacy and AI competency, strongly influence individuals' behavioral intentions to adopt AI-based technologies, with higher self-efficacy and greater competency fostering more positive attitudes that in turn increase the likelihood of adoption (Kwak et al., 2022; Naiseh et al., 2025). Attitude toward use, perceived usefulness, self-efficacy, and compatibility are key predictors of behavioral intention, whereas social influences play a relatively minor role, indicating that personal perceptions are the primary drivers of adoption (Ursavaş et al., 2025). In political contexts, AI use affects individuals' behavioral intentions to engage in specific activities such as AI-powered voter targeting, political advertising personalization, and online election campaigning, mediated by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, with media literacy moderating these effects (Zhao & Cao, 2024). Perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and positive attitudes toward technology also significantly shape behavioral intention in online political or ideological activities, with system quality and user perceptions influencing these relationships (Ren et al., 2022).

Despite strong intentions, actual use of AI can differ from intentions. Li (2023) found that perceived usefulness and ease of use positively affect attitudes, intentions, and actual use of AI-based systems, although learning motivation shows little mediating effect. Bowen et al. (2023) provide a concrete example in politics, showing that AI is already used for real-time fact-checking of political statements and rapid detection of misinformation, illustrating practical application in electoral contexts. Conversely, Ikon et al. (2025) highlight that in public services, AI's potential for improving efficiency and decision-making is often limited in practice by slow adoption, political regulations, and the need to retain human-centered tasks requiring empathy and intuition. Similarly, Mannonov and Myeong (2024) found that while citizens' intentions to adopt blockchain-based AI e-voting systems are shaped by perceived usefulness, ease of use, trust, and security, their actual use has not yet been measured, leaving a gap in understanding real-world engagement.

These contrasts suggest an important gap in the literature: while individuals may intend to use AI for concrete tasks such as voter engagement, election management, or public service automation, actual implementation often falls short due to technical, political, or human-centered constraints. This highlights the need for research that connects behavioral intentions with measurable real-world AI use in political and public contexts, focusing on trust, transparency, usability, and the ethical deployment of these technologies.

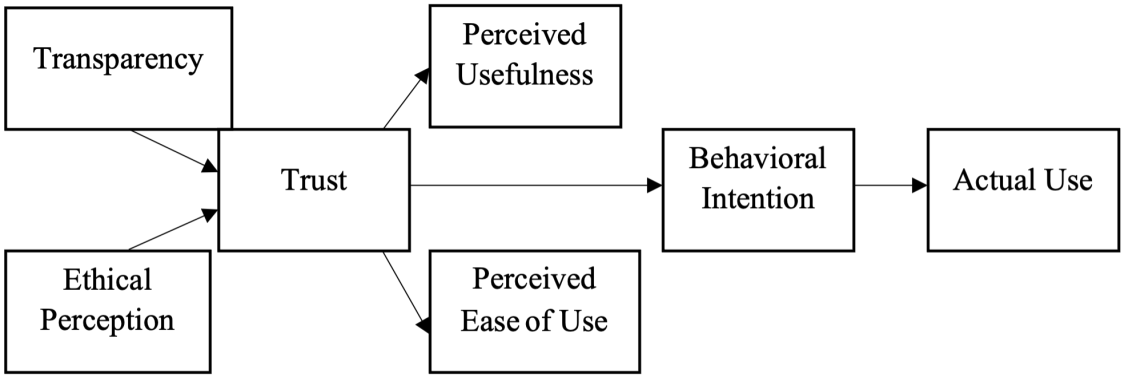
Discussion and Proposed Extension

The TAM certainly gives us a great starting point for understanding why people might embrace AI in politics. The review found that the usual suspects, Perceived Usefulness (like making campaigns efficient or messaging relevant) and Perceived Ease of Use (think simple interfaces and helpful training), are the key drivers for positive attitudes and intentions (Davis, 1989; Pislaru et al., 2024). However, it is crucial to distinguish between political practitioners, who focus on utility for campaign efficiency, and the voting public, who prioritize democratic integrity. The literature strongly suggests that a modified TAM needs to factor in things like social trust and even a citizen's existing political affiliation as vital elements that shape their attitude before they'll even consider using the technology (Yang et al., 2025; Jungherr et al., 2024). Furthermore, the discussion must expand beyond technical risks to include concerns over state-led surveillance, repression, and coercion, which significantly impact trust formation and public legitimacy. This complexity means practitioners, whether in government or political organizations, can't just deliver a slick piece of software; they have to actively develop strategies that build confidence and legitimacy among the electorate.

A critical, recurring theme in our review is the non-negotiable role of ethical concerns in determining whether AI is actually accepted. While people appreciate the utility AI offers, its inherent risks, such as bias, misinformation, and privacy breaches, can quickly shatter trust and hinder both acceptance and actual use (Kouroupis, 2023). This highlights that institutional transparency and clear ethical guidelines are paramount. Practitioners must step up to demonstrate genuine accountability in how data is handled and decisions are made to quell public skepticism (Kamal & Kaur, 2025). This essential need for ethical deployment then leads us straight to the most significant conceptual hurdle: the persistent gap between what people intend to do with AI and what they actually do. Good intentions are abundant, but real-world implementation often gets choked by political inertia, regulatory red tape, or simple human and organizational limitations (Ikon et al., 2025). Specifically, the literature points to technical and resource constraints, such as high implementation costs and a significant lack of data literacy among political personnel, as the primary factors preventing the transition from intention to action. Additionally, the necessity of retaining human-centered tasks that require empathy and intuition remains a barrier to full AI automation in public services.

As regards further research, the research community must prioritize closing this intention -action gap. That means shifting focus away from simply measuring good intentions toward tracking measurable, real-world AI use in elections, while analyzing the specific internal and external barriers (e.g., organizational capacity, regulatory hurdles) that prevent consistent, day-to-day deployment. To facilitate this, future studies should employ specific indicators to measure the proposed variables, such as "perceived fairness of algorithms" for Ethical Perception and "clarity of data sourcing" for Transparency. Scholars should also work to develop and test an Extended TAM for Political Engagement that formally includes Trust, Transparency, and Ethical Perception as fundamental elements of acceptance. By visually mapping these relationships, Figure 1 illustrates how transparency and ethical perception act as foundations for trust, which then influences the core TAM constructs. Ultimately, the successful adoption of AI in political life doesn't just rest on its technical merits; it absolutely hinges on political organizations' ability to build and maintain public trust through stringent ethical safeguards and complete transparency.

Figure 1 The Extended Technology Acceptance Model for Political AI Adoption



Source: Author

Furthermore, there is a need for more comparative analyses across different political systems to understand how diverse regulations impact the ethical use of AI. Ultimately, the successful and responsible adoption of AI in political life does not just rest on its technical merits; it absolutely hinges on political organizations' ability to build and maintain public trust through stringent ethical safeguards and complete transparency.

To facilitate future empirical research, it is essential to provide clear indicators for the newly proposed constructs, which are detailed in Table 1.

Table 1: Proposed Measurement Indicators for the Extended TAM Variables

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Variable	Definition	Proposed Measurement Indicators
Trust	The degree of confidence in providing institutions and the belief that AI systems will act reliably, safely, and in the public interest within democratic processes (Yang et al., 2025; Islam et al., 2024).	Confidence in the providing institution, such as electoral bodies or government agencies (Yang et al., 2025). Perceived reliability and accuracy of AI-generated political information (Islam et al., 2024).
Transparency	The degree of clarity and openness regarding the source of data, algorithmic decision-making, and the explicit disclosure of AI-generated content (Katzenbach, 2021; Kamal & Kaur, 2025).	Explicit disclosure and clear labeling of AI-generated political content or advertisements (Kamal & Kaur, 2025). Public clarity regarding how voter data is sourced and utilized for micro-targeting (Katzenbach, 2021).
Ethical Perception	The belief that AI applications adhere to moral standards and are not utilized for biased profiling, state-led surveillance, or political repression (Kouroupis, 2023)	Perceived algorithmic fairness and the absence of bias in voter profiling (Kouroupis, 2023).
Perceived Usefulness	The degree to which an individual believes that using AI will enhance their job performance or help reach political goals (Aldraiweesh & Alturki, 2025).	Capability to enhance campaign efficiency and deliver relevant, personalized messaging (Aldraiweesh & Alturki, 2025). Ability to speed up decision-making and automate routine tasks while reducing mistakes (Reis et al., 2021).
Perceived Ease of Use	The degree to which a person believes that using AI will be simple and require minimal effort (Aldraiweesh & Alturki, 2025).	Presence of clear interfaces, easy dashboards, and helpful guides or training (Aldraiweesh & Alturki, 2025; Pislaru et al., 2024). Accessibility of features like natural language processing and smart assistance (Mannonov & Myeong, 2024).
Behavioral Intention	A formulated conscious plan or an individual's willingness to perform a specific behavior, such as using AI-powered tools for political activities (Naiseh et al., 2025).	Willingness to adopt AI-powered tools for political engagement or campaigning (Naiseh et al., 2025). Intention to utilize AI for specific tasks like e-voting or verifying political information (Mannonov & Myeong, 2024).
Actual Use	The real-world, sustained implementation and practical application of technology (e.g., real-time fact-checking) beyond the initial intention to use (Li, 2023; Bowen et al., 2025).	Frequency of using AI-driven platforms for real-time fact-checking of political statements (Bowen et al., 2025). Real-time utilization of AI for misinformation detection or data analysis in electoral contexts (Bowen et al., 2025).

Source: Author

Conclusion

This article addressed the critical need for a robust theoretical framework to understand AI adoption in the high-stakes environment of political engagement. The review confirmed that while the core TAM factors of Perceived Usefulness and Perceived Ease of Use drive initial intentions (Davis, 1989), technical utility alone is insufficient in the political domain. The analysis demonstrates that acceptance is a multi-dimensional process that critically hinges on non-technical factors, including social trust, political affiliation, and deep ethical concerns surrounding bias, misinformation, and the potential for state-led surveillance (Kouroupis, 2023; Yang et al., 2025).

This analysis highlighted the most significant conceptual hurdle: the persistent and widely documented gap between an individual's behavioral intention to use AI and its actual, sustained implementation in real-world contexts (Ikon et al., 2025). Political inertia and regulatory complexity often prevent good intentions from becoming consistent deployment.

To close this gap, the article proposed an Extended TAM for Political Engagement that formally integrates Trust, Transparency, and Ethical Perception as fundamental elements of acceptance. The research community must prioritize testing this proposed model in comparative analyses and shifting focus toward tracking measurable, real-world AI use in elections. Ultimately, the successful and responsible integration of AI into political life depends not merely on its technical merits, but absolutely on the ability of political organizations to build and maintain public trust through stringent ethical safeguards and complete transparency.

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