






“Interactive and personalized digital communication: Key predictors of political participation intention in young Moroccans”

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INTERACTIVE AND PERSONALIZED DIGITAL COMMUNICATION: KEY PREDICTORS OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION INTENTION IN YOUNG MOROCCANS

Abstract

Through a quantitative lens, this study examines the effect of interactivity and personalization in digital communication on young individuals' political participation intentions within a non-Western context, specifically among Moroccan youth. Furthermore, it evaluates the mediating roles of attitude and perceived behavioral control. Adopting a positivist epistemological stance, the study utilized an online survey disseminated via social media. Data were collected during a post-election period in Morocco, a time marked by significant political engagement on social media. Subsequently, a purposive sample of 423 respondents was analyzed using Partial Least Squares regression. The findings reveal a positive and significant effect of both interactivity ($p < 0.01$; $\beta = 0.363$) and personalization ($p < 0.01$; $\beta = 0.333$) on young Moroccans' political attitudes. However, interactivity exhibited the largest effect. While personalization had a positive effect, only professionally-oriented communications resonated, challenging broader notions of personalization's universal positive effect on political attitudes. Additionally, perceived behavioral control was positively affected mainly by personalization ($p < 0.01$; $\beta = 0.200$), yet its variance was minimally explained ($R^2 = 0.092$) by digital communication features alone, suggesting that other political determinants are at play. Furthermore, both political attitude and perceived behavioral control significantly predicted political participation intentions, with perceived behavioral control demonstrating a stronger effect. Finally, mediation analysis confirmed that personalized interactive communication indirectly stimulates political participation intention through both attitude and perceived behavioral control ($p < 0.05$). These results extend existing models, highlighting the critical role of interactivity and personalization in shaping youth political participation intention in the Moroccan context.

Keywords

digital communication, personalization, interactivity, attitude, perceived behavioral control and behavioral intention

JEL Classification

M31, M37

INTRODUCTION

The advent of social media has introduced novel forms of participatory acts, including direct engagement with political content (e.g., liking, commenting, sharing), signing online petitions, and organizing online political events, etc. These media foster user mobilization through their interactive and personalized features (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013). In the political context, personalized communication implies a growing centrality of individual political actors, concomitantly with a decline in party preeminence (Balmas et al., 2014; Rahat & Sheaffer, 2007; McGregor, 2018). This personalization of communication encourages interactivity among young people, enabling them to express their reactions and perceptions.

In established democracies, empirical studies on the uses of digital communication have multiplied. However, the existing literature provides mixed results regarding the effects of digital communication on both online and offline activities (Grijdanus et al., 2020). Within the Moroccan context, investigating the effects of digital marketing communication on youth political participation is particularly pertinent. Despite the widespread digital media usage among young people, their political participation remains low. Indeed, a September 2021 survey by the National Agency for Networks and Telecommunication reported generalized social media use (over 99.5%) among young internet users aged 15 to 39. Concurrently, the High Commission for Planning revealed that as of July 31, 2021, the voter registration rate for individuals aged 18-24 was only 33.6%, compared to 94.4% for older individuals (60 years and over).

While recent works have examined the uses of digital communication (Bachar & Majdi, 2022) or the effects of interactivity and personalization on politicians' image and trust (Badreddine, 2022), existing research neglects the effects of interactivity and personalization on young people's political attitudes, particularly through the affective, private and professional dimensions of political personalization. Furthermore, perceived behavioral control, reflecting the ease or complexity of political action, may mediate the influence of interactivity and personalization on young people's intention to participate politically.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

In a context characterized by the rise of new information and communication technologies and the widespread adoption of social media, political communication has been subject to several transformations. Bennett and Iyengar (2008) highlighted this shift from conventional media to digital platforms, characterized by the integration of the Internet and social media as central vectors of political communication. In this context, interactivity emerges as a key dimension, offering a new dynamic to political communication. This interactivity is manifested through a "to-down" information flow exchange, with direct transmission of the party's desired message, without the filters of traditional media (Auter & Fine, 2018).

Interactivity is a determinant of the perceived utility and value of the targeted media platform (Alalwan, 2018). In the digital sphere, customers cannot directly assess product quality. Consequently, characteristics such as interactivity strongly shape customers' perceptions of the utility and advantages associated with these offerings (Barreda et al., 2016). Social media platforms are used to evaluate various products and solicit expert recommendations prior to purchase. Therefore, the number of reviews significantly influences attitudes and choices (Arora & al., 2018). In the political context, Lemay et al. (2019) demonstrate that social media use is closely linked

to political engagement, due to the interdependent nature of attitudes, behavioral intentions and social media interactions. This peer-to-peer sharing of experiences via social media can serve as a source of information and contribute to the development of favorable attitudes. These results from the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) suggest that interactivity between citizens and politicians can generate a positive political predisposition among young people.

Beyond their effect on attitudes, social media interactivity significantly influences user satisfaction (Shipps & Phillips, 2013). Yang and Shen (2018) confirmed that web interactivity can enhance user enjoyment, positive attitudes, and favorable behavioral intention, provided that the number of interactive functionalities is optimized. Specifically, users of social networking sites exhibit increased interaction when they perceive easy control over available features (Kim et al., 2015). This implies that social media engagement can be augmented when users can effortlessly interact with the platform and focus on specific tasks they intend to accomplish. Generally, a higher degree of effortless user control over social media functionalities correlates with extended site engagement. Building upon these findings, interactivity has the potential to cultivate a perception of ease regarding political activities, thereby fostering perceived behavioral control among young individuals.

In parallel with interactivity, social media offers a high degree of personalized political information to young people, that may be inaccessible through conventional media (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013). This personalization is conceptualized by McGregor (2018) as a direct narrative from the politicians themselves on social media. The multidimensional nature of this construct suggests a distinction between professional, affective, and private dimensions (Van Santen & Van Zoonen, 2010). According to Enli and Skogerbo (2013), the sharing of non-political content, including personal updates and images disseminated on Facebook, yielded higher levels of audience engagement than purely political communications. Farkas and Bene (2021) confirmed the positive effect of politician images posted on social media on users' attitudes, particularly on Facebook where users "like" photos of politicians centered on their private lives more. Therefore, personalization oriented towards sharing the private and emotional life of politicians can be significant in terms of its effect on young individuals' attitudes. Other research suggests that politicians' Instagram publications, sharing their convictions, programs, skills, and political achievements influence young individuals' beliefs and actions (Parmelee et al., 2023). This highlights the importance of professional self-personalization. Based on these prior research findings, personalization through its professional, emotional, and private dimensions can have a positive effect on the political attitudes of young people.

Furthermore, the specific characteristics of social media, particularly the personalization of political communication, are engineered to promote a direct bidirectional link between politicians and citizens (Van Santen & Van Zoonen, 2010). Indeed, parliamentarians utilize social media to clarify their political positions and to foster continuous interaction with their constituency (Pedersen, 2022). Ohme (2019) further asserts that social media seems to be the most effective channel for political actors to directly disseminate their messages to younger voters. This is especially pertinent as, being digital natives, this generation of voters benefits from easy access to political information (Ohme, 2019). In fact, young people obtain information regarding candidates and campaign issues in a personalized and organized manner in a news feed that meets their needs. In this sense,

the Internet is designed as a tool that facilitates individual actions based on their pre-existing motivations and preferences (B. Kim & Y. Kim, 2019). Consequently, this direct interaction between politicians and young citizens, significantly stimulated by the simplicity of internet and social media architecture, can have a positive effect on perceived behavioral control.

These constructs from the Theory of Reasoned Action, namely attitude and perceived behavioral control, are closely linked to behavioral intention. Indeed, Fishbein & Ajzen (2011) confirmed the relative contribution of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control to the prediction of behavioral intentions. Moreover, while the intention to adopt a behavior directly depends on the attitude towards the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, it indirectly depends on media (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2011). In the political context, La Barbera and Ajzen (2020) examined the additive and combinatorial effects of attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control in predicting voting intention. Their work concludes on the importance of attitude and the perception of the ease of performing a political act as primary determinants of voting intention. In this sense, political attitudes and perceived behavioral control influence the intention of political participation, particularly among young people.

The intention of political participation among young individuals also depends indirectly on the degree of interactivity and personalization of communication via social media (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2011). From this perspective, young people's political attitudes and their perception of behavioral control are considered mediating variables in the relationship between interactivity/personalization and political participation intention.

On one hand, concerning the mediating role of attitude, Lee and Kim (2018) included perceived utility and intention for adoption as predictors when assessing the extent of e-participation. Their analysis of the determinants of e-participation suggested the existence of a positive correlation between citizens' trust in the government (conceptualized as a positive attitude) and their propensity for active e-participation (Lee & Kim, 2018). These authors suggest that

electronic participation is favored when participants perceive that the government is receptive to their contributions. Their results advocate that local governments should prioritize cultivating trust and providing substantive feedback in response to citizens' contributions (Lee & Kim, 2018). This highlights the crucial importance of interactivity in developing favorable political attitudes and, consequently, stimulating political participation intention.

On the other hand, Xenos et al. (2017) examined candidates' use of Facebook during political communication campaigns. They observe that the adoption of digital social networks promotes direct interaction with supporters and modifies users' attitudes towards candidates' messages on Facebook. Their conclusions on the effect of political candidates' Facebook use on political participation intentions are variable, but they emphasize the importance of the tone, timing, and content of messages. They also suggest that attention to individual candidates can be amplified by new forms of political engagement (likes, comments, shares, tags, etc.). Furthermore, social media's ability to personalize information can contribute to increasing polarization of online opinions, creating networks among individuals sharing similar beliefs (Hong & Kim, 2016). These studies suggest that political attitudes mediate the relationship between personalization and young people's political participation intention.

Moreover, research consistently highlights perceived ease of use as critical for user engagement with digital platforms. Khan et al. (2021) confirm that perceived ease of use has a significant effect on trust, perceived utility, and citizens' inclination for e-administration services. This aligns with Sahari et al.'s (2012) finding that usable e-government system cultivate positive perceptions, driving the intent to adopt these digital services. Similarly, Khan et al. (2021) identified perceived ease of use as a key factor influencing trust in online administration services delivered through digital media. Beyond ease of use, factors such as social performance expectancy, perceived risk, effort expectancy, and perceived trust significantly influence the intent to use social media for making decision (Sharma et al., 2023). In this context, the perceived ease of use of social media mediates the relationship between interactivity and young individuals' political participation intention.

Finally, Mazzoleni and Bracciale (2018) state that Italian political leaders' posts elicit political engagement from fans through likes, reactions, comments, and shares. Indeed, digital media allows citizens to fully, autonomously, and richly experience their civic engagement, away from traditional political behaviors. Moreover, media hybridity allows citizens to express themselves personally and autonomously (Chadwick, 2017). While social media facilitates "clicktivism," i.e., a virtual engagement that only weakly involves the individual (Morozov, 2009), Koc-Michalska et al. (2016) demonstrated that social media enables online political participation (petitions, financial contributions, campaign engagement, etc.) and offline activities (participating in a meeting, product boycott, etc.). Indeed, individual politicians' posts stimulate young individuals' political participation intention through the ease of use of available social media functionalities. From this perspective, the ease of use of social media mediates the relationship between personalization and young individuals' political participation intention.

Informed by the reviewed literature, the current research seeks to study the respective effects of interactivity and personalization on young people's political participation intention, particularly within the Moroccan context. Furthermore, the study aims to examine the mediating roles of attitude and perceived behavioral control within the relationship between the interactive and personalization dimensions of digital communication and young people's political participation intention. Given these objectives and the specific research context, the following hypotheses are thus generated, and summarized in Figure 1:

H1: Interactivity has a positive effect on young Moroccans' political attitudes.

H2: Interactivity has a positive effect on young Moroccans' perceived behavioral control.

H3: Personalization has a positive effect on young Moroccans' political attitudes.

H4: Personalization has a positive effect on young Moroccans' perceived behavioral control.

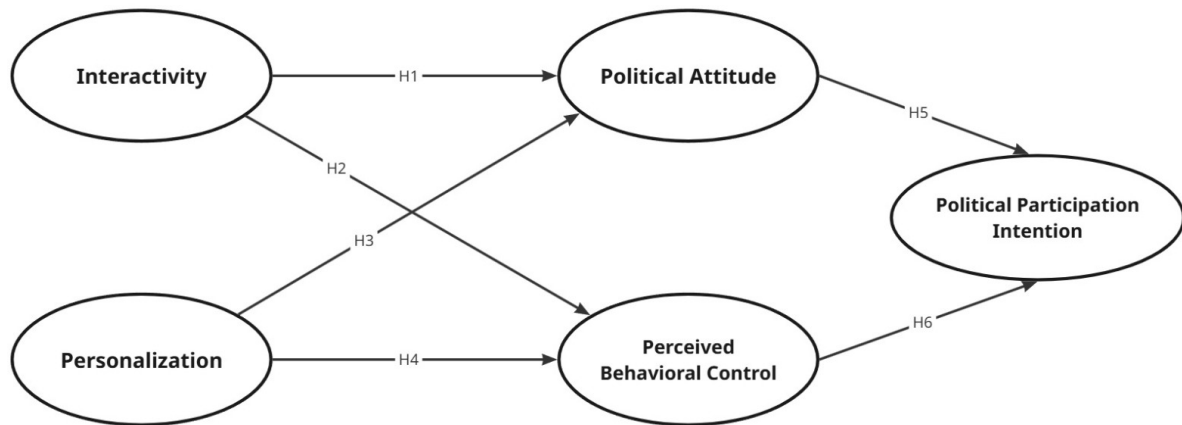


Figure 1. Research model

H5: A favorable political attitude has a positive effect on young Moroccans' political participation intention.

H6: A favorable perception of behavioral control has a positive effect on young Moroccans' political participation intention.

H7a: Attitude mediates the relationship between interactivity and young Moroccans' political participation intention.

H7b: Attitude mediates the relationship between personalization and young Moroccans' political participation intention.

H8a: Perceived behavioral control mediates the relationship between interactivity and young Moroccans' political participation intention.

H8b: Perceived behavioral control mediates the relationship between personalization and young Moroccans' political participation intention.

2. METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a positivist epistemological stance, favoring a hypothetical deductive approach to test hypotheses derived from the literature review. A quantitative methodology was chosen, relying on a structured questionnaire. This orientation guided all research phases, from instrument design to data analysis, adhering strict-

ly to principles of scientific rigor and validity of inferences.

The measurement instrument was developed, transforming abstract constructs into empirical variables (Angot & Milano, 2005; Thietart, 2014). Validated multi-item scales from existing literature were prioritized to ensure both reliability and construct validity. The questionnaire comprises 22 main items and 3 demographic questions. Interactivity was measured using five items adapted from Jiang et al. (2010), while personalization was assessed with five items from Metz et al. (2020). Political attitudes, perceived behavioral control, and young individuals' political participation intention were measured using scales from Fishbein and Ajzen (2011) and La Barbera and Ajzen (2020), each consisting of four items. All variables were evaluated on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "1 = strongly disagree" to "5 = strongly agree."

Particular attention was paid to the formal design of the questionnaire, specifically regarding clarity of objectives, commitment to confidentiality and anonymity, logical structuring of questions, and questionnaire length (Churchill & Iacobucci, 2006; Baumard et al., 2007). A pilot test was conducted to evaluate and confirm the instrument's reliability and validity before its definitive administration.

This survey was conducted online via Google Forms, primarily disseminated through social media. A multi-channel distribution strategy was adopted, including targeted email dispatches, dis-

tribution via university student lists, and publication of the link on Facebook and LinkedIn, supplemented by peer sponsorship through personal networks.

A purposive sampling approach, common in management and marketing, was employed. Inclusion criteria for participants were: (1) aged 18 to 44 years, (2) having used at least one social media platform within the last 12 months, and (3) possessing Moroccan nationality. The survey was conducted over a three-month period, from April 2023 to July 2023, a post-election period characterized by significant use of social media by Moroccan political actors. Special attention was given to sample homogeneity to optimize the internal validity of the tested causal relationships.

In total, 480 responses were collected. After a rigorous data cleaning process, 423 complete questionnaires that met the inclusion criteria were retained. This sample size significantly exceeds the minimum thresholds recommended for multivariate analyses (Chin et al., 2003). Data analysis was performed using Smart PLS 4 software, employing the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach, which is particularly suited for studying consumer attitudes, perceptions, and intentions in marketing (Hair et al., 2021).

Regarding the sociodemographic profile of the respondents, summarized in Table 1, it appears that 82.27% of participants are under 35 years old. Furthermore, women constitute the majority in the sample, and almost all participants hold a higher education degree.

Table 1. Demographic profile of respondents

Distribution	Respondents	Percent, %
Total	423	100
By gender		
Women	260	61.47
Men	163	38.53
By age		
18-24	188	44.44
25-34	160	37.83
35-44	75	17.73
By education		
Secondary	3	0.71
High education	420	99.29

3. RESULTS

The evaluation of a PLS model assumes careful examination of three main methodological elements (Hulland, 1999), namely the determination of the nature of the relationships between the measures and the constructs, the evaluation of the measurement model, and the evaluation of the structural model. Since the research model consists mainly of reflexive indicators, we still need to check the validity of the measurement model and the validity of the structural model.

3.1. Measurement model assessment

The measurement model, also called the outer model, is assessed through the study of convergent validity and discriminant validity. Hair et al. (2021) specified that the evaluation of convergent validity is conditioned by three indicators, namely the reliability of the items, the composite reliability, and the AVE. For the measurement model, the composite reliability values are generally satisfactory to good, except for the Perceived Behavioral Control construct, which is considered acceptable (Hair et al., 2021). Besides, the results of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) indicate that the admissible threshold of 0.5 is largely exceeded for all latent variables. Thus, the unidimensionality relate to the measurement scale is verified since the variables explain more than 50% of the variance of their corresponding items. Consequently, the conditions of reliability and convergent validity of the reflective constructs are successfully established (Table 2). Therefore, the validity of the measurement model is ensured (Hair et al., 2021).

Concerning discriminant validity, the Fornell-Larcker (1981) criterion shows that each variable shares a stronger variance with its indicators than with the other variables (Table 3).

The cross-loading values confirm the statistical contributions of indicators with a stronger correlation with the construct they compose than with other latent variables (Table 4). Therefore, the validity of the measurement model is confirmed.

3.2. Structural model assessment

Testing the validity of a model involves testing the hypotheses, evaluating the coefficient of determi-

Table 2. Synthesis of constructs and items after purification

Construct	Items	loading	Sources
Interactivity (Com_inter) $\alpha = 0.885$ CR = 0.917 AVE = 0.688	Communication via social media is an effective way of gathering feedback from Internet users.	0.796	Jiang et al. (2010)
	Communication via social media gives the impression that the political organization wants to listen to citizens.	0.774	
	Communication via social media encourages citizens to give their opinions.	0.899	
	Communication via social media gives people the opportunity to respond.	0.885	
	Communication via social media allows a two-way communication between citizens and political candidates and parties.	0.785	
Personalization (Com_Perso) $\alpha = 0.922$ CR = 0.950 AVE = 0.865	I appreciate communications that share the politician's professional activities.	0.923	Metz et al. (2020)
	I appreciate communications that share the politician's professional qualities and his appeal to a professional audience.	0.940	
	I appreciate communications that convey the appeal of the politician to a professional audience.	0.927	
Attitude $\alpha = 0.897$ CR = 0.929 AVE = 0.765	I like the idea of using social media to communicate with politicians and political parties.	0.809	Fishbein and Ajzen (2011), La Barbera and Ajzen (2020)
	I support the idea of politicians and political parties communicating on social media.	0.893	
	I support the idea of politicians and political parties communicating on social media.	0.910	
	I think that communication by politicians and political parties on social media represents an opportunity for all of us.	0.883	
Perceived Behavioral Control (CCP) $\alpha = 0.579$ CR = 0.826 AVE = 0.704	How sure are you that you can take part in a political activity (like, share, comment, attend a meeting, take part in a campaign, etc.)?	0.839	Fishbein and Ajzen (2011), La Barbera and Ajzen (2020)
	The decision whether or not to take part in a political activity is entirely up to me.	0.839	
Behavioral intention (Intent) $\alpha = 0.889$ CR = 0.923 AVE = 0.751	I will 'like', 'comment', 'share' and 'discuss' political issues communicated via social media.	0.810	
	I intend to take part in political activities communicated via social media.	0.875	
	I plan to vote for a candidate and/or political party promoted by social media.	0.889	
	I am going to try to vote for a candidate and/or a political party that is promoted by the social media.	0.891	

Table 3. Fornell-Larcker criterion

Variable	Interactivity	Personalization	Attitude	Perceived Behavioral Control	Intention
Interactivity	0.829				
Personalization	0.552	0.930			
Attitude	0.547	0.533	0.875		
Perceived Behavioral Control	0.253	0.279	0.337	0.839	
Intention	0.247	0.232	0.383	0.532	0.867

Table 4. Cross-loading criterion

Items	Interactivity	Personalization	Attitude	Perceived Behavioral Control	Intention
Interactivity1	0.796	0.460	0.461	0.194	0.186
Interactivity2	0.774	0.380	0.417	0.255	0.211
Interactivity3	0.899	0.529	0.513	0.213	0.198
Interactivity4	0.885	0.491	0.467	0.223	0.209
Interactivity5	0.785	0.417	0.404	0.165	0.224
Personalization3	0.521	0.923	0.513	0.258	0.224
Personalization4	0.526	0.940	0.479	0.268	0.245
Personalization5	0.491	0.927	0.497	0.252	0.178

Table 4 (cont.). Cross-loading criterion

Items	Interactivity	Personalization	Attitude	Perceived Behavioral Control	Intention
Attitude1	0.374	0.394	0.809	0.264	0.385
Attitude2	0.498	0.480	0.893	0.329	0.316
Attitude3	0.505	0.488	0.910	0.289	0.302
Attitude4	0.529	0.499	0.883	0.297	0.345
Perceived Behavioral Control1	0.192	0.236	0.329	0.839	0.594
Perceived Behavioral Control2	0.233	0.232	0.237	0.839	0.299
Intention1	0.298	0.280	0.395	0.550	0.810
Intention2	0.214	0.221	0.341	0.537	0.875
Intention3	0.185	0.148	0.292	0.377	0.889
Intention4	0.169	0.163	0.308	0.391	0.891

nation (R^2), cross-validated redundancy (Q^2), path coefficients (β), effect size (f^2), and the Goodness of Fit (GoF) index, which is a global validation index.

First, the analysis of the structural model indicates that the structural relationships are highly significant ($p \leq 0.01$), with the effect of interactivity on perceived behavioral control showing significance ($p \leq 0.05$) (Table 5). Moreover, all hypothesized relationships confirmed by hypothesis testing display a positive and significant correlation between explanatory and explained variables (path coefficient ' β ' close to 1).

Second, the R^2 coefficients show satisfactory explanatory power (Sarstedt et al., 2014). In general, the determination coefficients R^2 of the model show a good contribution of interactive and personalized marketing communication to the explanation of attitude. Indeed, 37.6% of young Moroccans' political attitudes are explained by interactivity with the political candidate. In other words, politicians' marketing communication on social media exerts a strong positive effect on young individuals' political attitudes. This result is consistent with the literature in question (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013). However, principal compo-

nent analysis revealed that young Moroccans do not appreciate communications by politicians that focus on their private life or those that share their personal emotions.

This personalized interactive communication positively influences perceived behavioral control. This contribution is consistent with the literature, as Ohme (2019) considers that the youngest generation of voters benefits from easy and personalized access to political information as digital natives. However, interactivity and personalization explain only 9.2% of young Moroccans' perceived behavioral control. Therefore, purely political determinants should be considered, such as the need for purely political reforms to promote citizens' their political participation (Choi and Song, 2020). Moreover, political participation can be perceived as a long process of information processing concerning party choice, understanding political mechanisms, ideologies, etc. These activities, while highly engaging, can nevertheless impede behavioral adoption.

Finally, the variables "political attitude" and "perceived behavioral control" explain 33% of young Moroccans' political participation intentions (Table 6). This result is consistent with the litera-

Table 5. Direct effect

Predictor	Dependent variable	β coefficients	t-value	p-value
Interactivity	Attitude	0.363	6.615	0.000
Interactivity	Perceived Behavioral Control	0.143	2.300	0.021
Personalization	Attitude	0.333	6.098	0.000
Personalization	Perceived Behavioral Control	0.200	3.200	0.001
Attitude	Intention	0.230	5.280	0.000
Perceived Behavioral Control	Intention	0.455	10.828	0.000

ture. Furthermore, La Barbera and Ajzen (2020) study confirmed the importance of attitude and perceived behavioral control in predicting voting intention in favor of European integration across all age groups. However, it is important to emphasize the importance of behavioral control with a path coefficient (β) of 0.455 compared to attitude with only 0.230. This result can be explained by the importance of utility and ease of use factors in accepting the adoption of e-participation (Ali et al., 2015).

Table 6. R-squared

Dependent variable	R ²	R ² adjusted	Result
Attitude	0.376	0.373	Moderate
Perceived Behavioral Control	0.092	0.088	Low
Intention	0.330	0.327	Moderate

The results related to the structural model also display Stone-Geisser Q-squared coefficients greater than 0 (Table 7), indicating predictive validity (Croutsche, 2009).

Table 7. Stone-Geisser Q² coefficient

Dependent variable	Q ² predict
Attitude	0.369
Perceived Behavioral Control	0.082
Intention	0.069

Finally, a GoF value of 0.448 was obtained, which exceeds the threshold of 0.35 (Table 8), allowing us to conclude on the good global validity of the structural model (Hair et al., 2021).

Table 8. GoF

Variable	AVE	R ²	GoF
Interactivity	0.688		
Personalization	0.865		
Attitude	0.765	0.376	
Perceived Behavioral Control	0.704	0.092	
Intention	0.751	0.330	
Average	0.755	0.266	0.44814

In conclusion, the analysis of the various coefficients confirms the overall validity and predictive validity of the research model. Figure 2 presents a summary of these results.

Given the multiple mediation relationships indicated by the analysis of the research model, explicitly testing these potential mediating effects becomes crucial. On the one hand, the analysis of the total effects (or indirect effects) confirms the existence of the mediation effect within the validated research model.

Indeed, the mediation analysis revealed the mediating role of “political attitude” in the relationship

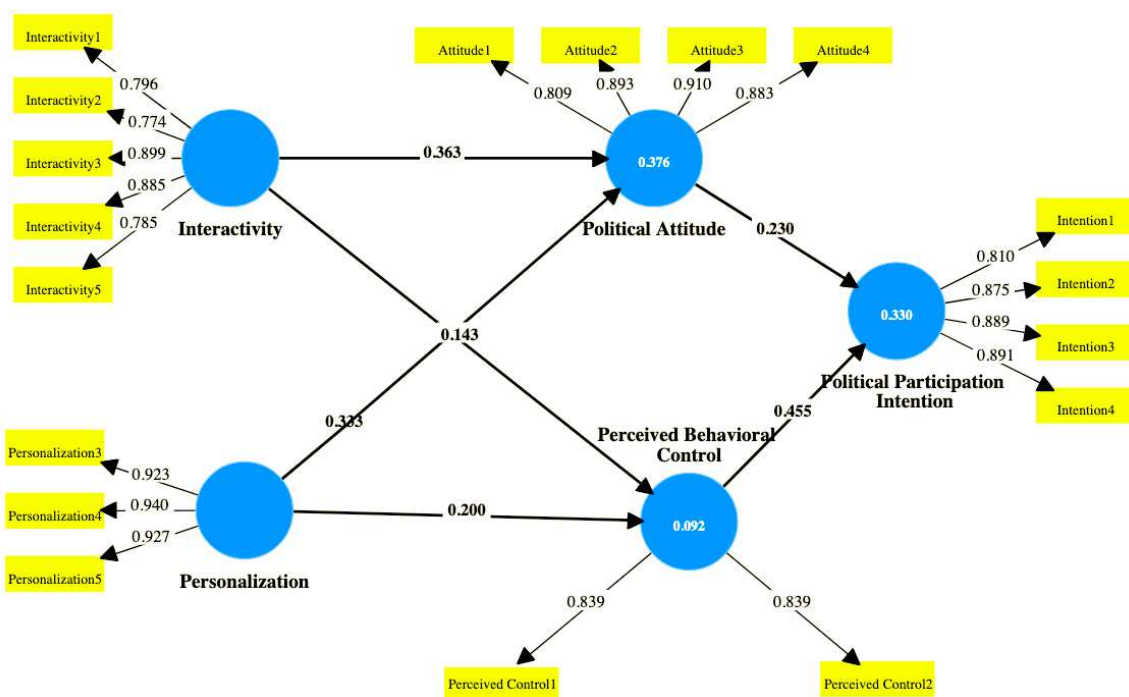


Figure 2. Validated research model

between “personalization” and “political participation intention of young people”. Furthermore, the mediation analysis results suggest a significant indirect effect of “interactivity” on the “political participation intention of young people” via “political attitude”. In parallel, perceived behavioral control is a mediating variable between the “Personalization” dimension of communication and “Political Participation Intention”. Besides, perceived behavioral control is a mediating variable between the “Interactivity” dimension of communication and “Political Participation Intention”. In fact, the mediation effect analysis confirmed that all the mediating variables in this research model are significant at $p \leq 0.05$ (Table 9).

On the other hand, the main condition for accepting a mediation effect to validate the second step is that the interval Lower Level “LL” and Upper Level “UL” must not include the value of “Zero” (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). This interval can be positive or negative. In fact, for this model as a whole, the values of the confidence interval exclude zero. As a result, the mediation effects are confirmed (Table 9).

Firstly, Interactivity was found to exert a positive and significant indirect effect on Intention through Perceived Behavioral Control ($\beta=0.065$, $t=2.249$, $p=0.025$). This suggests that an increase in perceived interactivity enhances individuals’ perception of behavioral control, which, in turn, fosters their intention. In parallel, a highly significant indirect effect of Interactivity on Intention was observed via Attitude ($\beta=0.083$, $t=3.868$, $p<0.001$). This indicates that interactivity substantially contributes to the formation of positive attitudes, which are key predictors of intention.

Secondly, Personalization also indirectly influences Intention through these two mediators. A

significant indirect effect of Personalization on Intention was identified via Perceived Behavioral Control ($\beta=0.091$, $t=3.008$, $p=0.003$). This highlights the role of personalization in increasing the perceived ease of political participation behavior, thereby impacting intention. Finally, Personalization showed a highly significant indirect effect on Intention via Attitude ($\beta=0.077$, $t=4.010$, $p<0.001$), demonstrating that personalized experiences cultivate more favorable attitudes, which translate into increased intention. Collectively, these results confirm that Perceived Behavioral Control and Attitude are crucial mediating mechanisms through which interactivity and personalization influence young people’s intention for political participation

4. DISCUSSION

This quantitative research provides significant insights into the effect of interactivity and personalization of digital communication on young individuals’ political attitudes and participation intentions. The findings confirm the overall and predictive validity of the proposed research model.

The analysis reveals a positive and significant effect of both interactivity and personalization of digital communication on young individuals’ political attitudes. Indeed, path coefficient analysis validates the positive influence of these two dimensions on the political attitudes of young Moroccans. Combined, interactivity and personalization explain 37.6% of the variance in young individuals’ political attitudes. Notably, the interactive dimension of digital communication exerts the largest effect ($\beta = 0.363$). This suggests that social media’s interactive functionalities have a more substantial and positive effect on young individuals’ political attitudes. This finding aligns with existing theoretic-

Table 9. Indirect effect and bootstrapped confidence interval

Indirect effect	β coefficient	Standard deviation	t-value	p-value	2.5% LL	97.5% UL
Interactivity → Perceived Behavioral Control → Intention	0.065	0.029	2.249	0.025	0.008	0.121
Interactivity → Attitude → Intention	0.083	0.022	3.868	0.000	0.041	0.126
Personalization → Perceived Behavioral Control → Intention	0.091	0.030	3.008	0.003	0.032	0.150
Personalization → Attitude → Intention	0.077	0.019	4.010	0.000	0.039	0.114

cal frameworks, which posit that social media adoption is often driven by the perceived utility of their interactive functionalities (Alalwan, 2018). Furthermore, the results resonate with Xenos et al. (2017), who argue that social media fosters direct interaction with supporters, thereby increasing young individuals' political engagement, especially when led by individual candidates. This study thus corroborates these views, reinforcing the idea that active engagement features are critical in shaping political attitudes.

Regarding the personalization dimension, while previous research identifies three aspects of personalization (professional, affective, and private) (Van Santen & Van Zoonen, 2010), principal component analysis in this study indicated that only communications from politicians sharing professional skills are appreciated and positively affect young Moroccans' political attitudes. This specific contribution challenges the notion of a universally positive effect of emotional and private self-personalization on political participation (Metz et al., 2020). This suggests a cultural or contextual nuance where a more professional and competency-based personalization resonates more strongly with young Moroccan audiences, contrasting with previous findings that might not account for such specificities.

Considering perceived behavioral control, it is mainly positively affected by the "personalization" dimension of digital communication. This outcome is consistent with the literature in question, such as (Ohme, 2019), which suggests a link between tailored information and individuals' sense of agency. However, the combined interactive and personalized functionalities of digital communication explain only 9.2% of the variance in young Moroccans' perceived behavioral control. This limited explanatory power suggests that other, potentially more intrinsic, political determinants may better account for the perception of political participation acts. This aligns with Choi and Song (2020), who emphasize the critical need to consider the effects of legislative and governance mechanism reforms on shaping public participation and civic values. These findings, while confirming the role of interactivity and personalization,

underscore the need for future research to explore these broader political and societal factors in the Moroccan context, extending beyond the scope of digital communication effects alone.

Additionally, hypothesis testing confirmed a highly significant positive effect of both attitude (*H5*) and perceived behavioral control (*H6*) on young Moroccans' political participation intentions (p -value < 0.01). The constructs of the Theory of Reasoned Action collectively explain 33% of the variance in young individuals' political participation intentions. It is crucial to highlight the greater importance of perceived behavioral control, with a path coefficient (β) of 0.455, compared to attitude, with a coefficient of only 0.230. These results are consistent with the established literature notably the work of La Barbera and Ajzen (2020), which often positions perceived behavioral control as a strong predictor of behavioral intentions. This finding reinforces the robustness of the Theory of Reasoned Action in predicting political participation intentions in a non-Western context, echoing similar patterns found in diverse populations.

As for the mediation effect analysis, it reveals a highly significant positive indirect effect of personalized interactive communication on political participation intention through attitude as a mediating variable (t -value > 2.58; P < 0.001). Furthermore, the study demonstrates a significant positive indirect effect of personalized interactive communication on young Moroccans' political participation intention through perceived behavioral control as a mediating variable with a p -value less than 0.05. The confidence intervals for all four mediation hypotheses did not include zero, confirming the presence of significant mediation effects (Hair et al., 2021). This contribution is further supported by the literature on the subject (de Jong et al., 2019), which has explored similar mediation pathways. Therefore, the results unequivocally confirm that digital communication effectively stimulates young individuals' political participation intentions by shaping their attitudes and enhancing their perceived behavioral control through personalized and interactive features, thus validating and extending existing models to the specific context of Moroccan youth.

CONCLUSION

This research examines the effect of interactivity and personalization in digital communication on young individuals' political participation intentions within a non-Western context, specifically among Moroccan youth. The findings confirm the positive and highly significant impact of personalized and interactive communication on young Moroccans' political attitudes. However, only personalized communications from politicians sharing their professional skills and achievements positively impact young Moroccans' political attitudes. Therefore, the Moroccan context questions the importance of the emotional and private aspects of personalized communication. Regarding perceived behavioral control, it is mainly positively influenced by the personalization dimension of digital communication. However, purely political determinants may be more explanatory of the perception of political participation acts, such as institutional reforms, level of education, interest in politics, perceived value of citizen participation, etc. Furthermore, the results confirm that the perceived ease of political participation through social media is the main determinant of young Moroccans' political participation intentions. These results are consistent with the literature in question.

In conclusion, social media foster young individuals' political participation intentions through interactive functionalities and the personalization of digital communication. Indeed, digital communication is a means to reconnect young individuals with politics, a tool for political expression, and an alternative to traditional obstacles that exclude young individuals from the political sphere. These results provide political actors with valuable indicators to adapt their communication policies to the requirements of digitalization and foster young Moroccans' political participation intentions.

Given that, this research represents an early inquiry into interactive and personalized dimensions of digital communication on young Moroccans' political participation intention; it is bound by specific constraints that pave the way for further research. Indeed, the main limitation of this study is the sample. In fact, the quasi-totality of the sample consists of higher education students rather than covering the entire young population. To advance this line of inquiry, future research is encouraged to corroborate the findings of this study by expanding the sample to all young adults groups, using control variables such as age, gender of participants, and even considering the level of education and/or socio-professional category.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

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APPENDIX A

Table A1. Synthesis of constructs and items

Interactivity	Communication via social media is an effective way of gathering feedback from	Jiang et al. (2010)
	Communication via social media is an effective way of gathering feedback from Internet users.	
	Communication via social media gives the impression that the political organization wants to listen to citizens.	
	Communication via social media encourages citizens to give their opinions.	
	Communication via social media gives people the opportunity to respond.	
Personalization	Communication via social media allows a two-way communication between citizens and political candidates and parties.	Metz et al. (2020)
	I appreciate communications about politicians' private lives (his children, his favorite soccer club, his thoughts and opinions as an individual, a father, etc.).	
	I appreciate communications in which the politician shares his personal emotions (joy, amazement, anger, sorrow, humor, emojis, memes, etc.).	
	I appreciate communications that share the politician's professional activities.	
	I appreciate communications that share the politician's professional qualities and his appeal to a professional audience.	
Attitude	I appreciate communications that convey the appeal of the politician to a professional audience.	
	I like the idea of using social media to communicate with politicians and political parties.	
	It makes sense for politicians and political parties to use social media communication.	
	I support the idea of politicians and political parties communicating on social media.	
Perceived behavioral control	I think that communication by politicians and political parties on social media represents an opportunity for all of us.	Fishbein and Ajzen (2011) La Barbera and Ajzen (2020)
	How sure are you that you can take part in a political activity (like, share, comment, attend a meeting, take part in a campaign, etc.)?	
	The decision whether or not to take part in a political activity is entirely up to me.	
	Social media communication makes it easier for you to decide whether to participate in politics.	
Behavioral intention	Social media communication makes it harder for you to decide whether to participate in politics.	
	I will 'like', 'comment', 'share' and 'discuss' political issues communicated via social media.	
	I intend to take part in political activities communicated via social media.	
	I plan to vote for a candidate and/or political party promoted by social media.	
	I am going to try to vote for a candidate and/or a political party that is promoted by the social media.	