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THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN PROMOTING CANDIDATES IN THE 2025 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF THE PAGES OF A NUMBER OF FEMALE CANDIDATES FROM POLITICAL PARTIES AND BLOCS IN KIRKUK GOVERNORATE

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Abstract. Social media platforms have emerged as one of the most crucial promotion instruments, given that they're very easy to connect with, they permit a public sphere for discussion and they form views. These sites have been used in politics, with women running for Parliament using their own social media pages to present themselves to the public, to spread their messages and programs to influence public opinion. This study investigates the treatment of female candidates in the social media as political products in their political party and their own pages. In the preparation period for the parliamentary elections in 2025, the content analysis methodology was used to analyze these pages. This period witnessed numerous changes and events that were reflected on the candidates' pages, and several issues raised by public opinion emerged, with differing attitudes toward them. The study led to a number of conclusions, including the establishment of a digital management in electoral lists, activation of immediate digital polling tools, and the continuation of digital communication outside of electoral seasons.

Keywords: Social Media Platforms, Political Promotion, Public Opinion Formation, Council of Representatives

Introduction

As the world of politics has become a major influence on citizens' opinions, through the use of social media networks that, exceeding the traditional role of mainstream media, have been playing an increasing role in the dissemination of public opinion, without the filters of expression, presentation, criticism or disapproval, the use of promotional strategies has become very relevant for candidates and citizens. In the new media environment, candidates' pages have evolved into a perfect medium for disseminating ideas and ideologies, as they are now candidates' official voice, the first source of information to the public and a significant channel for candidates' political marketing.

One of the major benefits of social media pages is their targeting option, which candidates have used to reach out for promotion. These pages have proven to be most suitable for candidates in terms of accessibility to the public and to mobilize public opinion. Simultaneously, they invite people to voice their opinions and sustain their stance in support of or rejection of it, or by being neutral.

Moreover, the events and crises that Iraq has encountered since 2003, led to high awareness of the Iraqi people about their rights, and they also acquired the ability to present their opinions and demand their rights in social media platforms, where they can interact with each other and share opinions and information.

Methods

First: Study Problem

The idea behind the development of social media platforms was to promote communication and social interaction. Their constant evolution, however, has led many people to adopt them for their original function and in different sectors, such as promotion and mobilization, opinion formation and formation after the political changes in many Arab countries during the Arab Spring and the subsequent evolution in the political landscape of many countries. Social media sites were a big component in helping to steer events and advertise the concepts behind them.

In the Iraqi political landscape, the concept of politics and promotion developed in this context, which is based on the Arab and international experiences in introducing the politician or political candidate who aspires to get involved in politics, as well as spreading his programs and ideologies through the use of promotional tools and methods that can be achieved through the wide capabilities of the electronic social media. These platforms made it possible for any candidate to start a campaign, to make their political products accessible to the public with new technologies and to use any persuasive means or method on their official page to try to attract and sway public opinion.

Thus, the problem of the research can be summarized in the following question:

What are the contents and issues that candidates/politicians promote on their electronic pages and what are the attitudes of the public to the issues which are promoted on their electronic pages?

Second: Importance of the Study

The importance of the study stems from the significance of social media platforms, particularly in the political sphere, as global and Arab trends have demonstrated the role played by social media in directing public opinion, particularly during election periods. Its importance can be highlighted as follows:

1. A modern technological media tool that has contributed to a new dynamic in political activity.
2. One of the new levels and fields of political practice that has provided Iraqi politicians and candidates with an outlet for promoting their personalities and policies.
3. Social media platforms are currently among the important sources in citizens' lives, as they constitute a source of information, a platform for intellectual discussions and maneuvering, mobilizing opinions, and shaping orientations.
4. Candidates and politicians' recognition of the importance of social media platforms has necessitated activating their electronic pages and employing modern technologies to increase the level of communication with their audiences and attempt to present themselves in the manner expected by voters.

Third: Objectives of the Study

The study seeks to achieve a set of objectives, as follows:

1. To identify the patterns of political promotion on social media platforms.

2. To determine the nature of the topics and contents promoted in the posts of Iraqi candidates and politicians on their electronic pages on social media platforms during the electoral campaign period for the Iraqi Parliament.
3. To demonstrate the effects of political promotion through social media platforms on the attitudes of the Iraqi public by examining their interaction with the materials published during the electoral period for the Iraqi Parliament.

Fourth: Study Hypothesis

The study is based on the following main hypothesis:

"Voters are influenced by and interact with the content of the accounts of female candidates for the Iraqi Parliament elections (2025)."

Fifth: Study Methodology

In order to reach the goals of the study, content analysis method was used to analyze the content of the electronic websites during the election campaign, namely the official pages of each female candidate on social media. The entire material published on their pages, which advertised candidates and introduced them, their visions, opinions and social-cultural and humanitarian programs was comprehensively enumerated. This also covered all the comments and forms of interaction that were published on those pages and made public in the timeframe determined by the Independent High Electoral Commission that said the timeframe for political promotion (electoral campaign) for the 2025 Iraqi Council of Representatives elections will start on Friday, October 3, 2025, and end at 7:00 a.m. on Saturday, November 8, 2025.

Sixth: Study Limitations

1. **Geographical Limitations:** The study was conducted on the electoral lists which submitted their candidatures for the parliamentary elections for 2025 in the Governorate of Kirkuk. Five lists were chosen: ("Taqaddum Alliance", "Arab Alliance in Kirkuk", "United Iraqi Turkmen Front", "Patriotic Union of Kurdistan", "and Kurdistan Democratic Party"). One female candidate was picked up from each list with the proviso that no candidate's name was referred to avoid any positive or negative promotion of the candidate.
2. **Temporal Limitations:** The content of the candidates' official social media pages was studied during the electoral promotion period (October 3, 2025 to November 8, 2025) on the official pages of each candidate.
3. **Scientific Limitations:** The study addressed the definitions of social media platforms and political promotion as the two main scientific variables of the study.

Section Two: Theoretical Framework

First Theme: Social Media Platforms

First: Social Media Platforms: Concept and Characteristics

With the advancement of communications and information technologies, social media platforms came into existence and ushered in a historic change in the field of communication among humans. They helped to push media to new frontiers and gave social media platforms and users more chances to exercise influence, cross borders and communicate beyond any regulatory constraints [1].

According to Drabla and Bloudani [2], social media platforms are "a modern electronic mechanism that came to the second generation of Web (Web 2.0) that allows the interaction of people with different social, age, cultural and ideological backgrounds, forming virtual relational capital to exchange ideas and experiences, share interest and inclinations with others through instant communication and sending messages with written, visual, or audio communication, exchanging images, videos, files and links, commenting and liking each other and interacting through each other." They have also been defined as: "Digital media and websites, or an electronic application that uses the Internet, allows users to have an account and to share and exchange information through text, images, audio, or video, and may include the ability to comment on, like, and share information" [3]. They also use the term "websites and programs that use the Internet to allow users to communicate with each other and to exchange information via computers or mobile phones" [4].

In view of the above, social media could be described as "websites on the Internet that allow people to communicate with one another in a virtual community environment, which is created around the interest or affiliation of its users providing them with the opportunity to communicate directly with each other by sending messages, accessing their personal profile and news and information made

available for viewing.”

These platforms may also be utilized for social objectives, including making it easier for folks to connect with one another in society, irrespective of where they go. They also can be utilized for commercial purposes: the platforms have turned into significant marketing platforms for organizations used to catch the eye of more clients [5]. They have also been incorporated as communication tools for the political blocs and parties to promote political activities and programs to provide access to different types of information, images, videos, etc., with ease and relatively low costs for the users [6].

Also, they have a lot of attributes that make them different from any other communication media that exists traditionally. The following are some of these qualities [7], [8], [9]:

1. **User-Based:** The primary content of these platforms is created by their users.
2. **Facilitating Interaction among Users:** Social media platforms provide extensive interaction among users through various means, such as chat rooms, gaming, and other forms of electronic interaction.
3. **Promoting Commonalities:** Social media platforms contain numerous virtual groups whose members share common interests and concerns.
4. **Focusing on Developing Relationships among Users:** The success of social networks increases as the number of relationships established among their users increases.

Second: Importance and Types of Social Media Platforms

Social media platforms have demonstrated their importance through the roles they perform. The following are some of these roles that highlight the importance of social media platforms [10], [11], [12]:

1. Communicating with people around the world.
2. Providing easy and immediate means of communication.
3. Obtaining information and news rapidly.
4. Promoting products, providing entertainment and leisure, and interacting with others.
5. Using them in e-learning processes.
6. Encouraging users to achieve their goals by joining groups whose members work toward achieving the same objective.

As for their types, numerous social media applications have spread worldwide, differing according to their uses [13]. Table (1) below presents examples of some of the most popular social media platforms, in addition to the number of people who use these platforms per month. Table (1):

Table 1. The Most Popular Social Media Platforms and Their Monthly Active Users

S	Platform Name	Monthly Active Users
1	Facebook	2.94 billion users
2	YouTube	2.53 billion users
3	WhatsApp	2.3 billion users
4	Messenger	4.4 billion users
5	Instagram	Over 2 billion users
6	TikTok	1.08 billion users
7	Snapchat	750 million users
8	Pinterest	463 million users
9	Twitter	372.9 million users

Source: Prepared by the Researcher

Results and Discussion

First: Political Promotion: Concept, Objectives, and Types

Political promotion is one of the modern political concepts that has become popular in the political field, especially in the context of various elections. It is a concept which is composed of two fundamental disciplines, marketing (one of the elements of the marketing mix), and politics. It has benefited from models and theories of political science on the one hand, and market tactics and models in its practical aspect on the other, and is carefully implemented in political contexts [14].

Political promotion is characterised as the series of activities which are aimed at increasing and organizing the number of supporters of a political candidate, or a particular political party, or support for a particular political program or idea with material support and mobilizing the public through the use of all mass communication means [15].

It can also be described as "communication process designed and planned with care by political parties or candidates to persuade the voters, with the aim of enabling voters to understand the commitments of any political party and candidate related to the party's policies and plans" [16].

It was defined by Al-Khazraji et al. [17] as "a series of activities involving the organization and development of activities, the introduction and promotion of activities in the integrated system, with the aim of mobilizing and strengthening the activities of the political party or candidate for election to ensure their victory in the elections they aspire to."

Thus, political promotion is defined as "an integrated communication process through coordinated and conscious promotion activities of political parties or political candidates targeting voters to make them accept the messages and goals of political parties/candidates."

The political party or candidate uses political promotion in the creation of their political program or electoral campaign in order to engage the audiences they wish to engage in support of their candidacy. Political promotion can serve a certain aim for a political party or politician in the electoral campaign, which are as follows [18], [19]:

1. Developing strategies to create awareness and support for the candidate and/or political party.
2. To keep the supporting public happy by providing the candidate or political party competitive advantages.
3. Leveraging planned strategies that utilise media outlets that have significant influence with the public.
4. To spread political opinions and advocate electoral campaigns to gain the most votes.
5. Researching public opinion and working out its orientations and needs in order to pass laws that would address those needs.
6. Establishing, developing and building a symbiotic relationship and rapport between the candidate (or party) and the electorate in the interest of both parties.

As for the types of political promotion, they can be classified according to the objective to be achieved, as follows [20]:

1. Promotion of political parties: In this type, political parties make themselves known and known to the public so that they are fully aware and knowledgeable about political parties, their mission and objectives and are thus convinced of these parties. As a result, the trust and loyalty of the role they play are built, and the party is supported and cooperated. This is reflected in strengthening the role of the party, which is mainly based on the public cohesion. This unity will depend on the goals that the party is aiming for and how much these goals are visible in the public. To improve the role of these parties, they must be able to manage effectively and efficiently [21].
2. Promotion of Individuals: In this type, the members of a political party promote themselves for representation of their party and for political offices; this type is particularly represented by this ability. That is "a human activity that consists of planning the electoral process and determining its organizational roles in implementing that process, monitoring and supervising the efforts and activities associated with planning the electoral product, in the sense of properly preparing the candidate and qualifying him to win the electoral process, determining the form of the support sought from voters regardless of the form of such a support, material or moral, or the cost of time of the electoral process before the actual vote, in addition to the cost of the electoral vote, and providing the voters with accurate, objective, continuous information about the candidate and his electoral program, in order to introduce them to the candidate, persuade them, and encourage them to vote for him, with the aim of realizing the exchange between the two parties, that is, between the candidate and the voter, between the candidate and the desire of the electoral process, between the voter and the interests and objectives he seeks to achieve through the candidate, by which the candidate seeks to win the electoral process" [22].

3. Promotion of Ideas: "Promoting ideas and convictions in a program in a way that is not random and spontaneous; but instead is based on a scientific method." It, therefore, emphasizes the promotion of an idea, issue, or position to achieve the goal of gaining public support for the position, acceptance of the idea, or encouragement of the proposed issue. The support for this idea hinges on the benefits of accepting and adopting that idea [23].

Second: Dimensions and Methods of Political Promotion

Political promotion is based on a set of dimensions that give it its distinctive identity and differentiate it from the promotion of traditional products. These dimensions can be outlined as follows [24], [25]:

1. **Social and Cultural Dimensions:** During election time they become significant in the political market because the social and cultural dimensions shape voters' voting behavior. Voting is not just an expression of a person's support or endorsement of a candidate or party based on promises or the satisfaction of a need or desire, but rather of meanings, values, and symbols of social and cultural significance.
2. **Ideological Dimension:** This means that it is individuals' ideas and beliefs that are driving them towards supporting a candidate, party or leadership that also share the same ideas and beliefs. An ideological dimension has a different impact in Western democracies than in emerging democracies. Public sentiment can be influenced by using values or ideologies in the political parties' campaigning activities, because thought and emotion go hand in hand to the extent of helping to obtain the support required from the public.
3. **Counter-Voter or Protest Voting:** Some people may not care as much about casting their ballot for their party or candidate so that they can win the election, but so they can stop another party or candidate from winning. So, the voter's intention when voting is to avoid a specific election outcome.
4. **Image and Reputation:** After emphasis had been placed on studying factors such as party affiliation, following political issues, and voters' evaluation of political and party leaders, attention in recent years has shifted toward studying the image of political parties and their leaders as one of the important requirements for building trust between the party or candidate and voters. Building an image is considered one of the foundations for the survival and continuity of a political party as a major political actor. This reinforces the inevitable relationship between political parties and the media. The interaction of these parties with the media should not be limited to treating them merely as means of dissemination, but rather as one of the most important elements of political marketing through which the ideology, vision, and political programs are introduced and disseminated to the electorate, while working to persuade them of what is being offered.

Political promotion process of a candidate and/or political party is a process of sending a political message to the public opinion for the purpose of capturing its attention, getting approval of the public opinion, its sympathy and support to gain approval from the public opinion and thus to obtain its participation in the program of the candidate and/or a political party. All possible methods are used in achieving these objectives from this perspective. In this context, the candidate or political party uses market intelligence to give ideas, the processes used to develop the optimal policy and how to articulate it to others. These procedures can be seen in political promotion methods, which are as follows [26], [27]:

1. Public Opinion Research Method: Public opinion is the sum of opinions and ideas and it is expressed through various media, political, social and cultural groups. This opinion is apparent in the general election or when a notable event happens. The political actors of the modern time have started to pay attention to public opinion polls to find out what people need, want and how they are oriented on the promotion and election campaigns [28].
2. Market Data Analysis Method: Analyzing the political market and political environment is considered one of the priorities of the political promotion planning process. This is a way for the political organization to determine what demands, desires and needs the consumers of politics, whether they are members of the supporting public or those whose support will be needed and whose backing will be sought during electoral campaigns, are seeking. For this reason, it is aimed at creating a database of the political market to uncover its challenges and opportunities. Hence, it's important for a political candidate to do market research to identify

the attributes and features of the various segments. The candidate or political party should also assess the needs of political consumers with regard to the programs offered by political organizations. It is also the candidate's responsibility to spot the major issues that lead up to the election, and to pick a stance on these issues that resonates with the majority of voters [29].

3. Political Product Identification Method: Political promotion is based on satisfying consumer needs and product policy is the core around which the activities of promotion are revolving. The political product is the behavior of political parties, their candidates, symbols, members, leaders, programs and political gatherings. The political product is a mix of personal characteristics and attributes that define the image of the candidate, the image of the party, the promises offered and the party or candidate's political program [30].
4. Determining Mass Communication Methods and Rules of Political Persuasion: This study should make certain that communication messages are suitable for the intended recipients and that they correspond to the policies and behaviors of political parties. These groups typically feature a team of advisors and experts who help to draft the party's messages, which tackle voter concerns and anxiety in ways that use arguments and evidence to diminish doubts about those messages and help build greater confidence in them. As these professional experts have carved out a niche for themselves, it is challenging for political parties to do without their expertise [31].

Third Section: The Applied Aspect

This section aims at analyzing the material of the official social media pages of female candidates for the elections of the Iraqi parliament in 2025 in the lists of political parties and blocs on the different social media platforms. All of the platforms will be viewed as a continuous package for each candidate, as a means of communicating to the public and as a means of marketing herself, her electoral program and her political vision. This will be done from two viewpoints. The first type involves scrutinizing the contents of the posts published on the official pages of female Parliamentary election candidates and their orientations, the themes that they focus on, the values that the candidate wishes to spread and promote in society, the issues to which they pay attention, and how they follow-up on social, economic, cultural, and political issues during the election campaign. The second view is towards the followers' comments or reactions to the published topics, their orientations to and opinions about the topics, and their interactions with the topics on those pages.

A total of (600) posts were examined and analyzed to confirm the validity of the study's main hypothesis which is that "Voters are influenced by and interact with the content of female candidates' accounts for the 2025 Iraqi parliamentary elections". It is important to note that political blocs, political parties and electoral lists cast their votes for a particular candidate to ensure that the electoral program is monitored rather than the name of the candidate is mentioned; and that the political entity or candidate does not mention the candidate's name in order to protect the privacy of the candidate's name and to prevent its public circulation in matters of positive or negative consequence in which the political entity or candidate might not wish to inform the electorate about. The electoral list or party name will be used, as a scientific name. (5) electoral lists were selected in Kirkuk Governorate, one female candidate per each list. For this purpose, the lists were carefully chosen that reflect the demographic diversity of the governorate, namely Arab lists (Taqaddum Alliance and the Arab Alliance in Kirkuk), Kurdish lists (Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and Kurdistan Democratic Party), and one Turkmen list (United Iraqi Turkmen Front):

First: Tables for Examining the Content and Promotional Content of the Electoral Lists

1. Examination of Topics

Table (2) revealed that the political content was the first with (27.5%) while the social content came after with (21.7%). This is due to the fact that female candidates from various political groups in the governorate of Kirkuk preferred to raise the political identity of the electoral list, and to emphasize the ideological aspects during the initial phase of the campaign; and owing to the pluralistic character of Kirkuk's demographic makeup that can be manifested in raising the social and humanitarian issues that reflect the needs of peaceful coexistence and solving outstanding community issues.

The indicators are also numeric and illustrate that in terms of posts on the candidates' social media platforms, all political lists were relatively equal. The Arab Alliance in Kirkuk list was the lowest in

position in terms of the number of posts, with (110) posts, while the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan list was first, with (130) posts. All three other lists contained an equal number of posts with (120) posts in each list. The candidates' enthusiasm for posting the highest number of posts, reflecting the promotional phase of the electoral campaign, is reflected by these numerical indicators.

Also, the indicators reveal that, compared to the candidates, the candidate of the United Iraqi Turkmen Front was more visible in this aspect, which occurs 45 times, due to her intensive focus on the political identity and national rights of the component. In the meantime, the candidate of the Taqaddum Alliance had more responses on social and humanitarian issues (32) and (30), respectively. This is due to the electoral strategy followed by every list in terms of their use of the pluralistic demographic characteristic of Kirkuk Governorate and in taking care of outstanding problems in the community, which are related to the needs of peaceful co-existence.

Table 2. Main categories of topics promoted in female candidates' posts by political list

Topic Category	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan Candidate	Taqaddum Coalition Candidate	United Iraqi Turkmen Front Candidate	Kurdistan Democratic Party Candidate	Arab Coalition in Kirkuk Candidate	Total (Frequency)	Percentage (%)
Political Topics	35	22	45	28	35	165	27.5%
Humanitarian Topics	20	30	13	22	20	105	17.5%
Social Topics	25	32	25	25	23	130	21.7%
Economic Topics	15	13	17	20	15	80	13.3%
Legal Topics	20	13	10	5	12	60	10.0%
Security Topics	15	10	10	20	5	60	10.0%
Grand Total	130	120	120	120	110	600	100%

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the official pages of the candidates on social media platforms.

2. Purposes of Political Promotion

As shown in the statistical distribution in Table (3), the purpose of political promotion that the candidates conducted on their online pages is revealed. There was a perfect split between the purposes of "promoting the party and the candidate" and "documenting field activities" (each (30.0%)). This finding confirms the dependence of the people responsible for the electoral list campaign on a "personal marketing" approach, where candidates' communication discourse was centred on the information of their live activities in the virtual space, aiming at establishing a political reputation and image with realism and proximity to the grassroots in the governorate's various constituencies.

On individual level, the candidate of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan prioritized mostly on "party and personal marketing" (45) occurrences and the candidate of the Kurdistan Democratic Party prioritized most on "field meetings and live tours" (45). The finding indicates that there are differences in the tactical tools adopted in the political marketing as a tool for building political reputation and a competitive image in Kirkuk.

Table 3. Purposes of political promotion by female candidates via their websites/pages

Category of Political Marketing Purposes	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan Candidate	Taqadum Coalition Candidate	United Iraqi Turkmen Front Candidate	Kurdistan Democratic Party Candidate	Arab Coalition in Kirkuk Candidate	Total (Frequency)	Percentage (%)
Promoting the party or personality	45	35	37	30	33	180	30.0%
Focusing on field activities and meetings	30	38	32	45	35	180	30.0%
Electoral education and awareness	20	15	18	15	12	80	13.3%
Media coverage and publishing ongoing news	15	12	18	10	15	70	11.7%
Critique and evaluation of local government performance	10	8	5	10	7	40	6.7%
Calling for dialogue and social harmony	6	8	6	5	5	30	5.0%
Providing direct services to citizens	4	4	4	5	3	20	3.3%
Grand Total	130	120	120	120	110	600	100%

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the official pages of the candidates on social media platforms.

3. Type of Post (The Visual Technological Format Used on the Pages)

Table (4) shows that there is a definite numerical predominance of 'image and integrated design accompanied by a caption' format which soared to (35.9%) while the video clips recorded (33.3%) on all the pages of the candidates representing the lists under study. However, plain written texts showed a decrease of only (8.3%). It is significant to note that the candidate of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan had the highest rate of visual clips with (46) and the Arab Alliance in Kirkuk had the lowest rate with (35). The

other blocs had fairly similar numbers of occurrences (38-41).

The results are in line with the features of the digital media environment in the present time (Web 2.0), in which emphasis is placed on easily available, pre-designed visual design combined with brief texts. This refers to the current interactive nature of the digital media environment (Web 2.0), which is able to communicate an idea quickly, and dramatically decrease the amount of time it takes to interact with the browsing virtual audience. In virtual environments, political consumers' behavioral reactions are more likely to be characterized as consuming attractive and condensed visual material as opposed to reading long textual messages.

Table 4. Type of Post (Visual Technological Template Used on the Pages)

Percentage (%)	Total (Frequency)	Arab Alliance in Kirkuk Candidate	Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) Candidate	United Iraqi Turkmen Front Candidate	Taqadum Alliance Candidate	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) Candidate	Type & Template of Digital Post
15.0%	90	15	18	22	15	20	Single Photograph Video Clip (Audio-Visual) Plain Text Only Image with Caption & Integrated Design External Referral Link Evaluative Question (Interactive Poll) Grand Total
33.3%	200	35	42	38	40	45	
8.3%	50	10	10	8	12	10	
35.9%	215	41	40	44	45	45	
4.5%	27	5	6	5	5	6	
3.0%	18	4	4	3	3	4	
100%	600	110	120	120	120	130	

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the official pages of the female candidates on social media platforms.

Second: Tables of Indicators of Audience Response and Engagement with the Lists' Posts

1. Levels of Likes

As seen in the data, in table (5), a structural convergence can be seen in the number of likes of the posts, with the maximum number (151–251 likes) occupying the most significant percentage (31.7%) of the total number of posts in all the lists. The figures indicate that the (Patriotic Union candidate) and the (Unified Iraqi Turkmen Front candidate) slightly outpaced each other in the advanced categories, with (45 and 40) respectively. This corresponds to the degree of party mobilization and the party's original ideological preferences of these two blocks in the local setting.

Table 5. Shows the Levels of Likes Achieved for Candidates' Posts According to Political Coalitions

Percentage (%)	Total (Frequency)	Arab Alliance in Kirkuk Candidate	Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) Candidate	United Iraqi Turkmen Front Candidate	Taqadum Alliance Candidate	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) Candidate	Post Likes Level Category
12.5%	75	15	17	13	15	15	Less than 50 likes
19.2%	115	24	25	20	24	22	51 – 150 likes
31.7%	190	32	35	40	38	45	151 – 251 likes
18.3%	110	20	21	22	22	25	252 – 353 likes
11.7%	70	13	14	15	13	15	354 – 454 likes
6.6%	40	6	8	10	8	8	More than 455 likes
100%	600	110	120	120	120	130	Grand Total

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the official pages of the female candidates on social media platforms.

2. Number of Comments (General Dynamic Discussion) on Electoral Posts

The data in the table (6) shows that the lowest group (less than 50 comments) occupied the first place with (38.3%) percent on the pages of all blocs. This indicator is of significant scientific importance, as commenting is a higher level of behavioral involvement from voters. The (Kurdistan Democratic Party) bloc had the highest number of occurrences in this category (48), followed by the candidate of the (Arab Coalition in Kirkuk) bloc with (47) occurrences, and the candidate of the (Patriotic Union of Kurdistan) bloc with (46) occurrences. This is why such lists are successful and able to initiate and bring up critical issues related to the services that citizens need, and it is why such lists can more easily reflect the main needs of citizens in Kirkuk.

Table 6. Shows the Number of Comments (General Public Active Discussion) on Electoral Posts According to Political Coalitions

Percentage (%)	Total (Frequency)	Arab Alliance in Kirkuk Candidate	Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) Candidate	United Iraqi Turkmen Front Candidate	Taqadum Alliance Candidate	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) Candidate	Number of Comments Category per Single Post
38.3%	230	47	48	45	44	46	Less than 50

Percentage (%)	Total (Frequency)	Arab Alliance in Kirkuk Candidate	Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) Candidate	United Iraqi Turkmen Front Candidate	Taqadum Alliance Candidate	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) Candidate	Number of Comments Category per Single Post
26.7%	160	29	30	34	32	35	comment s 51 – 150 comment s
16.7%	100	13	20	21	22	24	151 – 251 comment s
9.2%	55	9	12	10	11	13	252 – 353 comment s
5.8%	35	8	6	6	7	8	354 – 454 comment s
3.3%	20	4	4	4	4	4	More than 455 comment s
100%	600	110	120	120	120	130	Grand Total

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the official pages of the female candidates on social media platforms.

3. Levels of Post Sharing with Friends

Table (7) indicates that about half of the analysed posts (51.7%) were in the very low level of sharing (less than 50 shares) and across all lists. It is worth noticing that the two Kurdish blocs' candidates topped this category in terms of frequency, with each having (64) occurrences, followed by the candidate of the Turkmen list with (62) occurrences, and then the candidate of the Arab lists with (60) occurrences. From a behavioral perspective, the result can be attributed to the specificity and sensitivity of electoral and political space in the pluralistic context of Kirkuk. When a voter clicks "share" on a post, they are automatically giving it a public endorsement by their social network and home and thereby validating the partisan identity of the candidate and his message before those people. Thus, it's not surprising that indegree voters are reluctant to make an "overt behavioral commitment."

Table 7. Shows the Levels of Post Sharing with Friends According to Political Coalitions

Post Share Count Category	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) Candidate	Taqadum Alliance Candidate	United Iraqi Turkmen Front Candidate	Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) Candidate	Arab Alliance in Kirkuk Candidate	Total (Frequency)	Percentage (%)
Less than 50 shares	64	60	62	64	60	310	51.7%
51 – 150 shares	30	28	29	28	25	140	23.3%
151 – 251 shares	18	16	15	16	15	80	13.3%
252 – 353 shares	10	8	8	7	7	40	6.7%
354 – 454 shares	5	5	4	3	3	20	3.3%
More than 455 shares	3	3	2	2	0	10	1.7%
Grand Total	130	120	120	120	110	600	100%

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the official pages of the female candidates on social media platforms.

The statistical analysis and comparison of the values of the different levels of interaction (likes, comments and shares) in the above tables shows that the statistical values of the political consumer (voter) in the Governorate of Kirkuk were directly affected, in varying degrees, by the content of the female candidates' official pages throughout the electoral campaign. This influence was not just on the type of reception, but it became an active interactive communication behaviour. This gives empirical scientific evidence confirming the validity of the study hypothesis that reads: "The voter is influenced by and interacts with the content of the female candidates' accounts for the parliamentary elections of 2025 in Iraq", which is fully accepted.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the results of the analytical approach and the digital content coding tables of the electoral lists in Kirkuk, along with the accompanying interactive indicators, the study reached the following final conclusions:

1. Tactical Consensus on the "Person Marketing" Strategy: The results of the field showed a balanced and intensive approach of female candidates of the different political blocs (Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, Taqaddum Alliance, Unified Iraqi Turkmen Front, Kurdistan Democratic Party and Arab Coalition in Kirkuk) to promote the personality and party and to document the field activities. From this, it could be concluded that political marketing thought in Kirkuk has moved from presenting abstract party programs to a strategy of "marketing the personality as an independent product" which would ensure the creation of a competitive advantage and develop the image that was close to the aspirations of voters.
2. Use of the technical and visual properties of digital media: The data showed that forms of media, namely the use of images (images integrated with designs and video clips) was the dominant form of

media in all pages of the list candidates being investigated, while there was a sharp decrease in written text without any images. This underscores the awareness of campaign organizers regarding the interactive nature of the second generation of the Web (Web 2.0) and the use of visual elements of attraction to minimize the length of engagement and hence voters' understanding of complex electoral messages in Kirkuk's pluralistic context.

3. Rationality and Instrumentality of Voters' Interactive Behavior in Kirkuk: The response indicators showed the voters' interactive behavior with the media is rational and instrumental, and there were significant differences in response in terms of likes, comments, and active sharing behavior in Kirkuk. The presence of the digital audience was revealed to be characterized by "rational instrumental engagement", meaning that the participants intensively engage in commenting and discussion only with content and critical issues that directly resonate with their current needs (such as weaknesses of the local service projects, economic stability, and the issue of displaced persons returned), and do not interact with the traditional political rhetoric.
4. Social Sensitivity to the Viral "Sharing" Feature: The analyzed posts were concentrated around half of the posts on the bottom categories of "post sharing" (Share) indicated the social and political sensitivity of Kirkuk Governorate. The digital voter likes and comments more than he or she would share a clear political stance (with the sharing feature) publicly with his or her real social and family group. This means that ability to share digitally is now an indicator of mobilization and full partisan allegiance to the list, not just fleeting sympathy.

Second: Recommendations

In light of the conclusions reached by the study, a set of recommendations was presented for the electoral lists and female candidates, which we hope will be useful for forthcoming electoral programs, as follows:

1. Digital Management in Electoral Lists: The study recommends that political parties in Kirkuk stop posting and improvisation and start forming "professional digital marketing management units" to develop the message of candidates and depend on communication specialists to design electoral message to enhance its impact and avoid communication waste.
2. Shifting toward "Marketing Solutions and Issues": In order to appeal to the silent and independent voter block and stimulate levels of behavioral engagement, we suggest that the candidates of each of the five lists dial back on the showmanship and purely personal activities that they employ in their digital communication and focus it specifically on "marketing solutions and issues."
3. Enable Digital Survey Tools and Instant Opinion Polls (Polls): The study urges those in charge of running the candidates' accounts to maximize the use of digital survey tools and instant opinion polls, since they play a vital role in measuring public opinion, identifying what voters want, and making citizens real actors in the formulation of the electoral discourse.
4. Continuity and Engagement of Digital Communication Outside Electoral Seasons: The research recommends that if the candidates are elected to represent the Governorate of Kirkuk in the next parliamentary term (2025), they keep their digital pages active and engaged throughout the term and not just during elections, and turn these pages into a channel of official communication to document services and achievements and receive citizens' complaints.

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